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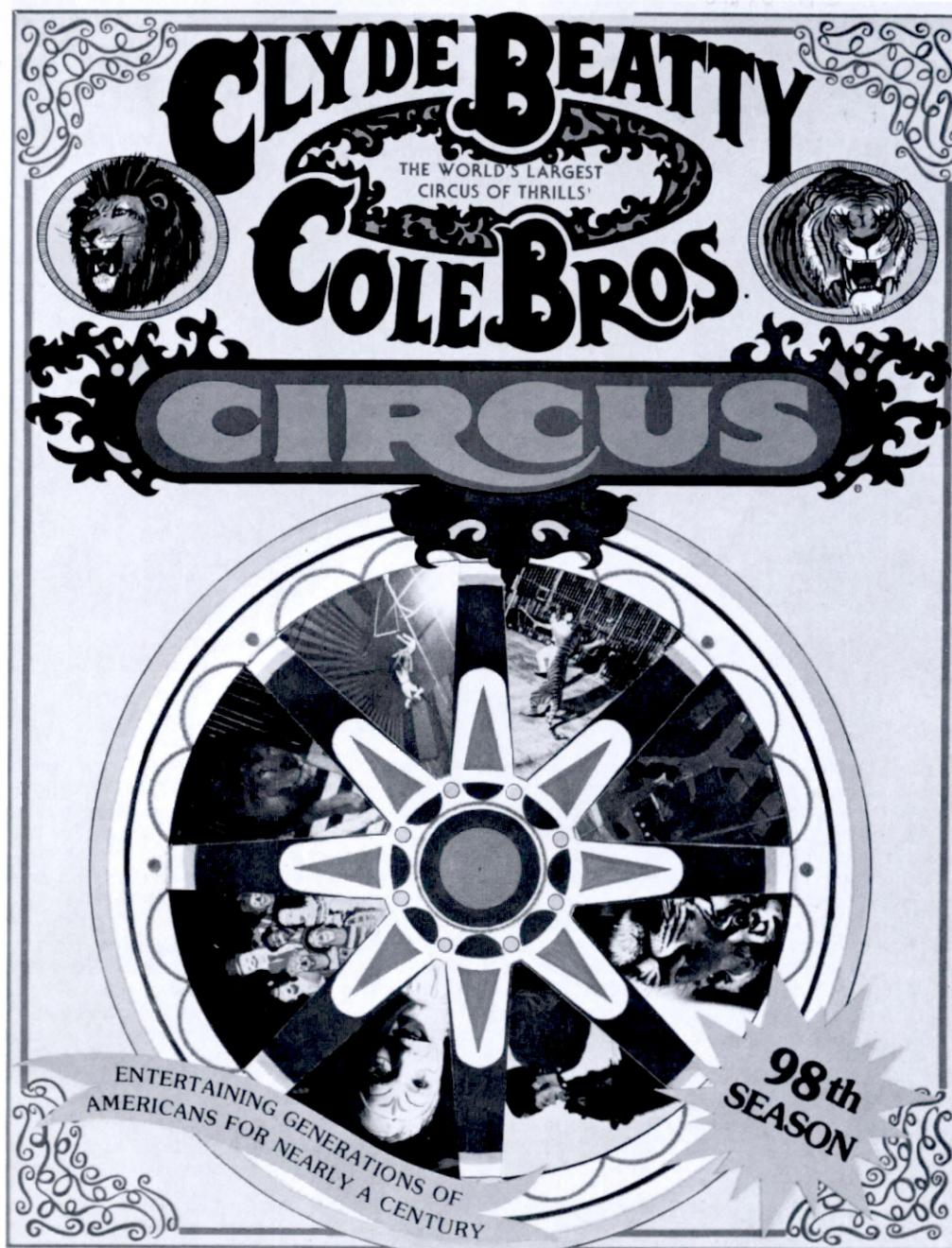
THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Season's Greetings



from the Staff  
of

**CIRCUS  
WORLD**  
MUSEUM  
BARABOO, WISCONSIN



## SEASON'S GREETINGS

Tom Scallen, John W. Pugh and Timothy J. Stinson  
Producers and Directors

Jerry Collins  
Chairman

John Herriott  
Performance Director

# JOHN ROBINSON'S CIRCUS

1824 ~ For 101 Years Has Kept Faith With The Public ~ 1924



## JOHN ROBINSON CIRCUS 1924 SEASON

by Chang Reynolds

The years following the first World War disclosed many changes and realignments in the field of circus enterprise in the United States. The well-known circus historian, Joseph Bradbury, has discussed many of these features in his fine articles in *Bandwagon* and *White Tops*. This author has related the story of Sells-Floto for two of those years, Hagenbeck-Wallace for several seasons, and John Robinson for 1923. The last mentioned was published in *Bandwagon*, Vol. 6, No. 5, Sept.-Oct. 1962. Since that 1923 season was a highlight in the John Robinson circus history of the 'Twenties, a brief review will be included with this paper.

The John Robinson title had first been used by the Mugivan and Bowers interests in 1916 on a large outfit made up largely of equipment from their Danny Robinson Circus which had toured with the name Famous Robinson Circus. In 1917, these owners included their Howes' Great London Show with the John Robinson Circus. By 1920 that Great London title was again on the road and at the end of that season they acquired the Yankee Robinson Circus from the Hall farm in Lancaster, Missouri. In 1922, Mugivan and Bowers used the Gollmar title on the Howes' Great London show and at the end of the season it went into quarters at Montgomery, Alabama. At this location it was readied for 1923 and plans were completed to tour the season with it bearing the name of the John Robinson Circus. It should be

remembered, at this point, that the equipment that had been on their earlier John Robinson Circus was still located at Peru, Indiana.

A multitude of new faces, mostly those of animal trainers, appeared at the Peru quarters at this time. An expanded building project took place at that location and the rejuvenation not only brought new life to the quarters but gave it a totally new appearance. Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers gave the spur to all of this activity. Ed Ballard, who had been very active in the affairs of the

This fine midway scene was taken in Evansville, Indiana, on May 1, 1924, by Karl K. Knecht. Pfening collection.

This letterhead design was made for the 1924 season. The title is in red outlined in gold. The dates are in red and "For 101 Years" is green. The photo of Robinson is in brown. The letterhead was probably designed and printed by the Erie Litho Co. Pfening collection.

Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in earlier years, was part of the financial arrangement but was not active as far as the management was concerned. The first two men named above, not only planned, designed, and moved into action at Peru, they also made constant visits to their traveling shows in order to check on the progress and successes of their organization. In order to secure the



most efficient staff possible they selected top managers and supervisors.

Zack Terrell, one of the finest, held the reins on the Sells-Floto Circus. Dan Odom, rough but extremely capable, managed the John Robinson Circus and later Hagenbeck-Wallace. Bert Bowers managed the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus from 1919 through 1923, and for most of 1924. In the fall of that year, after Bowers had left for a European tour, Mugivan managed it briefly. Then, in October, Dan Odom took over as manager and Sam Dill, assistant manager of the John Robinson Circus, became head of that outfit. In the previous years Louis Chase had been assistant to Bowers.

As related, the Robinson equipment was stored at Peru at the end of the 1922 season. However, the plans of the Corporation included use of the Gollmar equipment which was in quarters at Montgomery, Alabama. Therefore, most arrangements for the 1923 John Robinson Circus were carried out at Montgomery during the winter of 1922-23. The train came north to Peru about the first of April and some Robinson equipment was added from that quarters. The Gollmar equipment was, in fact, that used on the Howes' Great London Circus in 1921. The Great London title had been leased to Golden, Runkle, and Adams for 1922.

Bill Woodcock, who was at the Montgomery quarters and traveled with the Robinson show for a period during 1923, described the equipment in a letter to this author in 1962. "This Robinson train had twenty-five cars, wooden flats and stocks. The show had three tableau that were with the Gollmar show in 1922; the same steam calliope and rebuilt air calliope and the same twelve cages. A Robinson tableau, with a painting of a chariot race on one side and Tarzan fighting a lion on the other side, was added at Peru. Other equipment was added but I only recall a big light plant generator wagon. Base color on the cars and baggage wagons was yellow, but there were one or two red baggage wagons, and the few baggage wagons added at Peru were painted a cream color with dark red trim. The Gollmar advance car went to Peru with that title on it. It was painted orange, the same as the Gollmar train in 1922."

This, then, was the John Robinson equipment for 1923; a heterogeneous mixture of wagons that had seen much service but was in a good state of repair. Several changes were made for the 1924 season. Of first importance, five railroad cars were added to make a thirty-car train. These cars would, in all probability, have come from the earlier John Robinson train of 1922.

In summary, and before considering details, the reader should bear in mind that the John Robinson Circus equip-



William Backell, manager of the advance advertising car, is pictured with his crew and the bill car in Boone, Iowa, on July 4, 1924. The show played Boone on July 18. Pfening collection.

ment for 1923 and later was in a large part made up of the 1922 Gollmar Circus train cars, tableaux, dens, etc. These had, in turn, come from the Howes' Great London Circus of the year before. In general, the Gollmar (Great London) equipment was in a better state of repair and had more attractive wagons, especially for parade, than did the Robinson show which had been stored at Peru. For those readers interested in equipment, an attempt will be made to review the intervening years between 1920 and 1923 with emphasis placed on that part of the equipment which eventually arrived on the John Robinson Circus that year and was in use in 1924.

The Howes' Great London Circus of 1921 was composed of the best equipment to be found among the remains of the Yankee Robinson Circus and the Howes' show of 1920. The rail equipment ended up as a twenty-five car train and was billed as all-steel construction.

The office staff posed in front of the white ticket wagon on the Robinson show in 1924. This wagon had come from the Sells-Floto Circus and was built in Denver around 1912. Pfening collection.



However, this was not accurate since the cars were of the combined wood-semi-steel type in use at that period. In January, 1922, the Gollmar show purchased three new sleepers and announced an all-steel train — still not an accurate statement.

The show management had approximately thirteen cages to select from the two circuses so there was no problem on that score. However, they had no cage for "VICTOR", the young hippopotamus purchased from the National Zoo in Washington in February. This problem was solved by selecting a den from the Denver quarters of Sells-Floto Circus. These cages were not of an elaborate design although there was some scroll work of interest on them. Their chief attraction lay in their beautiful, sunburst wheels which varied according to their source. In general, the Howes' cages had an inside sunburst while the Yankee Robinson show cages had the outside type. These cages were given a general overhaul during the winter of 1921-22 and, in fact, two of them were completely rebuilt. From a viewer's standpoint something was lost at this time during the rebuilding. In 1923, the John Robinson Circus used twelve of these cages while on tour.

The well-known Dode Fisk Bandwagon had been the Number One Bandwagon with Howes' Great London in 1920, but in 1921, with the



Yankee Robinson equipment available, the equally famous Norris & Rowe - 101 Ranch Wild West Bandwagon was used as No. One and the Dode Fisk wagon became the Number Two Bandwagon. This continued on the John Robinson Circus in 1923 and 1924. Later, it was converted to a baggage wagon and it was in use on the Robinson show through 1930 as such.

The very beautiful, former Norris & Rowe - 101 Ranch Wild West tableau became the Number One bandwagon on Howes' Great London in 1921 and on the Gollmar show in 1922. It was used for the same purpose on the John Robinson Show in 1923 and 1924. This circus went out in 1925 not planning to parade but, after a few weeks on tour, the parade was resumed. It has been reported that the circus had the equipment on tour and was prepared to continue this event. Only the steam calliope was sent from quarters to fill out the line-up which toured the streets. Research is not clear on this point and most evidence indicates that it, and other famed wagons were destroyed in a fire at the West Baden quarters in September 1927.

The Robinson Circus carried four parade tableau wagons in 1924. Reference to Bill Woodcock's letter will indicate that the 1923 Robinson show had three tableau from the 1922 Gollmar Circus and one from Peru quarters. Of these, the Clown Bandwagon, dated from the Dode Fisk Circus and was recognized by the painting of the polar bear on its side. It was on Howes' Great London Circus in 1920 and 1921. The Side Show Bandwagon, usually termed "The Lion's Bride," was also a former Dode Fisk wagon and was in use on Howes' Great London in 1920 and 1921. This tableau should not be confused with the Hagenbeck-Wallace tableau which has been termed the "Lion and Snake," or "Lion's Bride."

A third tableau-den dated from the Forepaugh Circus of the 19th century.

**The No. 2 band rode tableau wagon No. 24. This wagon had been built for the Dode Fisk Circus by the Moeller Bros. Photo taken in McCook, Neb., August 2, 1924, Joe Fleming collection.**

It was later on Forepaugh-Sells and then sold by the Ringlings to Rice Bros. Circus in 1913. It was on Howes' Great London as early as 1916. It was in use on the 1924 John Robinson Circus and carried No. 27. The fourth tableau, which in 1924 carried the Robinson side show band, bore No. 30 and was the only tableau wagon from the 1922 John Robinson Circus. This wagon featured the painting of "Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar." As an aside, the finest wagon that the Robinson show used in 1922 was purloined at the end of that season. This was the famous "Lion and Gladiator" bandwagon, which, when Sells-Floto was moved in from Denver, was lifted from the Robinson show and used on the "Circus Beautiful."

The air calliope used on the 1923-1924 John Robinson Circus originally came from the Denver quarters of Sells-Floto to the 1920 Howes' Great London Circus. It was also on that show in 1921 and on Gollmar in 1922. Bill Woodcock has confirmed this statement and added that it was rebuilt.

For some reason the John Robinson steam calliope of 1922 was not in use in 1923 or 1924. The King brothers bought it during the winter of 1924-25 and it was used on their Walter L. Main Circus. With the collapse of that show in 1929, it was repossessed by Donaldson and sent to West Baden. Later it was given to the Ford Museum. The steam calliope that was used by John Robinson in the years under consideration came from the Yankee Robinson Circus and was on the Howes' show in 1921 and Gollmar in 1922. Some reconstruction was performed on it during the winter of 1921-22 which changed the arrangement of the carvings and its profile.

The staff selected to direct the John Robinson Circus of 1924 was essential-

ly the same as that of the previous year. C. D. Odom was the manager and Sam B. Dill was his assistant. James Albanese was treasurer with M. G. Stokes, secretary and assistant treasurer. Claude E. Mahone served as auditor. Arthur R. Hopper was the general agent and railroad contractor. W. J. Lester was local contractor. The contracting press agent was John J. Hanley; Hal Oliver was advance press agent, and Edward B. Head, press agent back. C. A. Lawrence served as excursion agent and R. L. Morgan as special agent.

The Equestrian Director was the capable Bob Thornton. Charles Prentice was general superintendent. Harry Levy became superintendent of privileges and candy stands while Duke Mills had the Side Show.

W. M. (Egypt) Thompson began the season as trainmaster and held that position until 9 October when he was made assistant manager to Sam Dill. This occurred after Odom left for the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus.

Charlie Rooney was Boss Hostler. His assistant, O. Williams, became feed man in September and Eddie Moore came from the Hagenbeck-Wallace show to take William's place. James Scanlon was in charge of the Ring Stock, but Rooney supervised all of the horses on this circus.

Additional superintendents were Charles Prentice, general superintendent; Charles Martin, reserved seats; Charles Young, canvas; Arthur Gibson, commissary; R. H. King, lights; Charles Lewiston, properties; and Chubby Guilfoyle, animals. Cheerful Gardner was in charge of the elephants. Others on the staff were: J. C. Bartlett and John Fenelon, 24-hour agents; Wm. Backel, Manager of Advance Car No. 1; Fred G. Barker, manager of Advance Car No. 2; J. L. Reed, manager of Advance Car No. 3;

**Victor the baby hippo was featured in this 6 sheet Erie bill in 1924. Pfening collection.**



William P. Taylor, checker-up; and Frank McGuyre, Legal Adjuster. McGuyre left about the middle of August and his place was taken by Herbert Du Vall of Little Rock, Arkansas.

The task of carpenter was handled by Hanson; Goldstein was the blacksmith; Cronin had the banners; and E. V. Dixon was the announcer. Edward Woeckener was Musical Director.

The season opened with a week's engagement at the public auditorium in Cleveland, Ohio. This successful stand, April 16-22, preceded one of the most unusual seasons ever experienced by a circus as far as weather was concerned. The temperature was cold for many weeks. It rained continually. The lots were muddy and usually contained standing pools and ponds of water. Week after week passed without a rest from the inclement weather. It is a tribute to the personnel of this circus that they survived, let alone existed, on this more than disagreeable tour. But Cleveland was a success; the acts went off with alacrity and a professional flavor that signalled mid-season experience. And, it was dry.

The program presented at Cleveland and throughout the touring season featured many animal acts. It also presented many great trainers of the day as well as other well-known performers.

#### The Spectacle

This fantasy was entitled "Peter Pan in Animal Land." Peter Pan (Billie Burton) was discovered by the audience as the lights came to a soft brilliance. She was asleep in the arena with nymphs dancing around her. Then, the magic of colorfully-costumed riders and horses and brilliantly be-decked wild animals passed in review around the hippodrome track and through the rings.

This clown bill was a 6 sheet poster from Erie used in 1924. Pfening collection.



Tableau wagon No. 30 carried the side show band in the parade in McCook, Neb. Joe Fleming collection.

Accompaniment was supplied by Woeckener's band and Miss Julian Rogers, prima donna, who sang her songs from the height of the show's tallest, and heaviest, elephant.

Display No. 1 - Victor, the famous blood-sweating hippopotamus, drew an African cart around the track. Miss Renaud presented this feature while clowns filled the rings. Clown Alley was headed by Ab Johnson, principal, and Abe Goldstein, producing clown. With them were the Slivers Johnson Trio, Haven Feaster, Harold Nicholson, Charlie Lewis, Bill Scott, Charles Fortune, Bill Tate, Fred and Doodles De Marrs, Fred Leslie, Emmett Kelly, Herb Fanton, Walter Wellington, Fred Nelson, Bert Lawrence, Van Jerome, Harry Reno, Ed Rand, Charles Walsh, "Pickhandle" Butler, Ernie Wilson, Frankie Ellis, Steve Anderson and Harry Lewis.

Display No. 2 - In the arena, Clyde Beatty presented a very large group of polar bears. In the rings, the foot-ball horses kicked medicine-sized balls all over the territory.

Display No. 3 - Arabian horses and educated ponies in the rings.

Display No. 4 - Miss Julian Rogers, riding a white Arabian horse, sang her song to the doves, while the birds flew about the arena and finally lighted upon her outstretched arms.

Display No. 5 - Back to the rings for stunts with an elephant, pony and dog in each ring. The Misses Peterson and Grace Wilbur presented these animals. In the arena, John (Chubby) Guilfoyle worked a large group of leopards, pumas, lions, hyenas, and a black leopard.

Display No. 6 - Twenty-five ladies on the swinging ladders captured most of the attention. Beneath them, in the rings Clyde Beatty and John Guilfoyle presented riding bears.

On the track, the clowns attracted the audience with a hodge-podge of skits, including "The Teapot Dome" and "Yes, We Have No Bananas." (Remember that tune?)

Display No. 7 - Hattie Guilfoyle worked a large group of leopards in the arena. In the rings, Ola Donovan and Ova Thornton presented white collies riding Arabian ponies.

Display No. 8 - Dolly Castle presented a tiger riding an elephant in the arena. In the rings, Dewey Butler and Wink Weaver introduced monkeys riding collie dogs.

Display No. 9 - Another riding act - this time a lioness riding a liberty horse, presented by Margaret Thompson. In Ring 1, Ernest Schumann worked a fine group of sixteen Arabian horses in a liberty act. Schumann had signed with the American Circus Corporation during the winter and had been assigned to the John Robinson Circus. He had operated his own circus in Norway and Sweden for about a decade before arriving in America. He remained with the Robinson show until September and then was sent to the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus to break new stock. Ola Donovan took over his act at that time. In Ring 3, during this ninth display, Rudy Rudynoff presented a liberty horse act composed of Kentucky thoroughbreds.

Display No. 10 - Wink Weaver and Dewey Butler worked in the rings with high-diving dogs and monkeys. In the arena, Cheerful Gardner presented greyhounds leaping over elephants.

Display No. 11 - Sixteen cats (Bengal tigers, Nubian lionesses, and black-maned African lions) were presented by Peter Taylor. This was one of the great features of this period in circus history and Taylor was regarded as the top trainer at the time. He had spent his youth in England and had worked with Hagenbeck in Germany and with Acarddo in Russia previous to his arrival in the United States in the early days of the century. He came to the States with the Bostock



Peter Taylor, featured wild animal trainer, is shown in the backyard of the John Robinson Circus in 1924. A number

Wild Animal Show and in 1910 was attacked twice within two weeks by the same lioness at Dreamland, Coney Island. The second time he was so badly maimed that it was predicted that he would never work animals again. In spite of this, or because of it, by the end of June that year he was advertising for a position as a lion trainer stating his world-wide experience as a recommendation. By the end of 1910 he had left Bostock and was located at Bartell's Hillside Park. He worked a lion act for the Jones Bros. and Wilson in 1914 and 1915 and for Cook Bros. and Wilson in 1916. In 1917 he had a lion act on Coop and Lent Circus.

Display No.12 - In Ring 1, a group of South American goats from the Andes performed their stunts as directed by Charles Lewis and in Ring 3, five Duroc pigs, coached by Dewey Butler (dressed as a Rube), amused the crowd.

Display No.13 - In Ring 1, Cheerful and Babe Gardner presented the big elephants - an act of five animals. The seven young elephants were worked in Ring 3 by George Montgomery and Ola Darragh.

Display No.14 - This was the first

of the big top canvasmen are in costume for the spec "Peter Pan in Animal Land." Woodcock collection.

display on the program to be presented that did not include a wild or domestic animal or birds or combination thereof. (Fanatics of the Al G. Barnes Wild Animal Circus please note.) In this display, the Renzos, dancing wire artists, worked one ring while Joe Thompson, who performed backward somersaults on the tight wire, worked the other. In the arena, Piquetta Morales did her dancing on the silver thread. A familiar face was missing from the program this year that usually had been included among the wire artists of the John Robinson Circus. Tetu Robinson, who had been a star on this show for a dozen years, did not troupe with it, but instead, performed at Luna Park, Coney Island.

Display No.15 - The track was filled with thirty dancing horses and thirty dancing and singing girls.

Display No.16 - Cheerful Gardner brought in the elephants for a mount on the hippodrome track and human butterflies were suspended in mid-air by their teeth. The ladies were Hattie Martin, Gladys Gouridine, Ruth Morales, Lobe Morales, Concho Morales, Theresa Baron, and Elsie Devore.

Display No.17 - The final display was the usual fox hunt with high-jumping horses. The riders were Ola Donovan, Billie Burton, Edna Carreon, Ova Thornton, Bobbie Brant, Anna Butler, Carlos Carreon, Rudy Rudynoff, Dewey Butler, E. Feaster, and Bernie Briggs.

The program was changed very few times during the road tour. It was short in some respects, most notably in flying acts and other trapeze skills. However, with the Corporation emphasis on animal acts, this show surely had them—in every display save one. There were no perch acts, nor Risley, nor anything resembling gymnastic feats except the somersaults on the wire. In fact, as indicated earlier, it was almost a duplicate of some earlier Al G. Barnes Circus performances with "every act an animal act and every animal an actor."

For those patrons wanting to partake of the old-time circus flavor, Duke Mills presented a representative lineup of side show features. He was assisted by Pete Staunton, the inside lecturer. Among those of the original cast for the 1924 season in the kid show were: Jack Huber, who painted pictures while holding the brush in his mouth; Firo, the fire eater; M'lle De Arcy, sword walker; Ward Hollinds, the tattooed man; La Pearlaefena and her snakes; the Pin-headed people from Africa; Professor Morrell and Louise, Yankee wood workers; Princess Kanahee, Australian Bushwoman; Elastico, who grew one and one-half feet at each performance; the McLeod Family of Scotch Highland dancers and bagpipers; a Hawaiian

The entire performing personnel of the John Robinson Circus posed for this panorama photo in 1924. Julian Rogers, the prima Donna is in the center front row. In the second row with a dark uniform and military hat just to her right is Chubby Guilfoyle, next is Dewey Butler. The second man to Guilfoyle's right in the white uniform is a young Clyde Beatty. The featured wild animal trainer Peter Taylor is not in the photo. Pfening collection.



Troupe (music and dancing): Tiny Elizabeth, twenty-six inches tall, who weighed thirty-three pounds; the Sinsindasi Troupe who combined magic, water juggling and knife throwing; and D. C. Officer.

After closing in Cleveland, the John Robinson circus spent a day en route to Marion, Indiana. On the 24th of April, rehearsals under the big top were held, and on the 25th, Friday, the show officially opened its tour at Marion. It moved to Anderson on Saturday. The weather at Marion was clear but very cold. In spite of the chill two good houses resulted. At Anderson on Saturday the weather continued to be very cold.

Monday, the 28th at Indianapolis, the show was on a lot at Washington and Belmont A Street, and the weather warmed enough to provide a good day with fine business. At Terre Haute, Tuesday, the contracted lot was too soft from recent rains to hold the equipment, so the circus moved further out to Summer Gardens. Here the big top, side show and other necessary tents were placed while the cookhouse, horse tents and their related equipment was left on the original lot (known as the Ohio Show Grounds.) No parade was given due to the delay in changing lots, but a good attendance resulted. At Vincennes, on Wednesday, it poured. The tents were up before it became intense and there was fair business. Evansville was the Thursday stand. New Albany was visited on Friday in better weather. Ed Ballard and family were visitors. The show moved to Kentucky for the Saturday stand at Danville. Here the flats of the first section, while being spotted, ran onto a bad switch. One car was derailed and the boiler and commissary wagon were smashed. Tim Carey, with great effort, got breakfast for the personnel without too great a delay. The parade went out on time, the afternoon show was packed to the curbs, and night attendance was great. The Boss Property Man, Carl Johnson, was injured that night while taking down the steel arena. He was replaced

five days later by Doc Williams, master mechanic and superintendent of the Golden Bros. Circus which had recently closed in Arkansas.

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Trained and  
Presented by  
"Cheerful" Gardner

Presenting the Super Circus Spectacle  
**"PETER PAN in ANIMAL LAND"**

**1924 VINCENNES**  
**WEDNESDAY**  
**APRIL 30**

Newspaper ad used by the Robinson show in Vincennes, Ind., in 1924. Circus World Museum collection.

The second full week of the season under canvas opened at Lexington, Kentucky. Here the show used a new lot at Angelina and West High Streets - a short haul. It was still very cold and, in addition, it rained. Karl Knutson was employed as 24-hour man. He

replaced John Schiller who was on that assignment temporarily. Knutson was also from the Golden Bros. Circus. Sam B. Dill joined the show here. At Frankfort, on Tuesday, the second section did not reach town until ninety-three. The parade did not get out until nearly one o'clock. The show was on a rough lot located on a hill. It was also some distance out of town. Paris was next and here the circus had to change lots. Fortunately the new location made the haul much shorter. At Newport on Thursday, Jerry Mugivan was visiting the circus for the first time. Additional visitors were Mr. and Mrs. John Sheesley, and personnel from the Ruben & Cherry Carnival, Marysville. Friday's stand, had good business in spite of low, dark clouds and extreme cold. On Saturday, at Ashland, only the skill of Charlie Rooney and his teamsters, plus the power of the baggage stock, moved the show off the lot. It had rained all day long and the ground was very soft. Mud wrapped the wheels and pulled the heavy wagons into a bottomless mire.

During the third week the Robinson show had muddy, soft lots at every stand and rain nearly every day. At Huntington, West Virginia, on Monday that was the story. At Charleston on Tuesday it was more of the same with the show using a lot in Kanawha across the river. The only way to reach the lot was by way of a toll bridge and the high water and poor car service hurt the show's business. Here, Patricia Salmon, of the recently closed Ziegfield Follies, joined the circus. Back to Middleport, Ohio, on Wednesday and it again rained all day. Another soft lot at Lancaster, Ohio, on Thursday and at Athens, the next day, the streets were torn up in preparation for paving. The lot was on the fairgrounds and in pretty good shape, but there was a long detour around the torn-up streets and the necessity for "shoeing" the wagons down a steep hill. At Marietta, which closed the week, Karl Knutson, the new 24-hour man, had pumps at work on the lot for eighteen hours before the circus arriv-



ed. Although the citizens of Marietta thought the circus could never get on this lot, it was in fairly good condition by Saturday morning. As a result, there were two good houses.

Clarksburg, West Virginia, was the first date of the following week. This stand produced the largest day's business of the young season. La Verne Hauser joined the show at this stand. Fairmont came next and it produced a small lot and narrow, congested streets. The parade was eliminated due to the congestion. At Morgantown, Pa., on Wednesday, the total day was lost. It was blown in 1923 also. The lot was located at the summit of a steep hill. The paved road ended at least a quarter of a mile before the lot could be entered and all the rain had made the clay road leading to the grounds impassable. Only the cookhouse and horse tents were erected. The show left that evening at seven-thirty for Uniontown. The lot at this stand was in good condition and, in spite of the previous visits of two circuses and a carnival, business was good. At McKeesport on Friday the police would not clear the streets of traffic and, added to this, most of the streets were torn up for repair. The parade was called off. The week ended at Elwood City and it was a miserable day. Rain and wind and torrents of water running from a lot situated on high ground in the immediate vicinity led to an unhappy experience.

Plodding along on its scheduled route, the John Robinson Circus hoped for better days but viewed the future with alarm. The weather cleared a bit at Warren, Ohio, on Monday, May 26, but the ground was soft. The lot was near the center of town and two good houses attended. Patricia Salmon, who had recently joined, mysteriously disappeared at this stand. The next day at Ashtabula many loads of cinders and sawdust were dumped on the lot to fill the low spots that were under water. At Jamestown, New York, on Wednesday, the lot was in such a horrible state that the circus moved to a lot in Falconer, about three miles away. The show attempted the parade, but finally Dan Odom cancelled that affair. In spite of the move and lack of business, the town gave one of the best stands of the season up to that point—which may not be saying much for this tour. Buffalo was played for two days, on May 29-30. The lot was the Carnival Court show grounds at Main and Jefferson Street. Business was good; it was cold the first day but warmer on Decoration Day.

Patricia Salmon returned as mysteriously as she had disappeared. She had probably dried out in the meantime - this was some different type of trouping compared to Ziegfield's Follies. Niagara Falls was the Saturday stand and the lot was a



**Mrs. Babe Gardner, and boss elephant man Cheerful Gardner with Victor, the baby hippo on Robinson in 1924. Chang Reynolds collection.**

long way out. The parade did not return until one o'clock. Business at night was very good considering that all patrons were bundled-up in heavy overcoats.

The Robinson show then made the long run by the Michigan Central Railroad from Buffalo to Detroit over Sunday. It was scheduled in the Motor City for a week at four different locations. The show train arrived at Windsor, Ontario, at two in the afternoon on June 1 and there was only a short delay before the cars were spotted on Kircheval Street near the lot on East Jefferson Street. On Wednesday the show loaded and moved to a lot at Fort and Green Streets. Thursday and Friday, after reloading, it used a lot in Highland Park, opposite the Ford plant. On Saturday at Hamtramck, a lot known as the Playfair Avenue Showgrounds (at the foot of Playfair Street) was used. Hauling the wagons across town had been tried in previous years and never proved to be a satisfactory method of movement. Therefore, this circus loaded on its train and unloaded for each lot. George and Lone Franklyn, wire performers, were recent additions, and La Verne Hauser was working the polar bear act. Reportedly, this was the largest group of polar bears ever worked by a woman.

After the week in Detroit, the John Robinson Circus moved to Toledo, Ohio, for Monday, June 9. The show arrived in the rain and it rained hard until noon. Then it stopped and the parade went out - late. The show lost Doc Williams, boss property man, at this stand. He was taken to the hospital with pneumonia and died two days later. It will be recalled that he joined

the circus from the Golden show earlier in the season. Williams had been with circuses for over thirty years. Considering the weather this show had been experiencing, it was a wonder that more of the personnel were not already out with an illness or in a hospital.

At Ann Arbor, on Tuesday, the local Kiwanis Club showed their good taste and entertained Patricia Salmon and Julian Rogers at a luncheon. Clowns and some of the domestic animal acts went to the University of Michigan Hospital to entertain crippled children. Battle Creek came next and this was followed by Jackson where a performance was given to the inmates of the penitentiary. Among acts already mentioned in this narrative, the show included a concert which was a Wild West affair led by Carlos Carreon. Additional members of this troupe were Anna Butler, trick riding; Dewey Butler, rope spinning; Joe Graham, roping and bronc riding; Jerry Burrell, roping and bronc riding; Bill Derling, bronc riding; and Abe Goldstein, clown. The feature was Carlos Carreon with his trick riding and his roping of six horses in one loop.

Of course, at the close of the night performance in Jackson, a cloudburst dumped tons of water on the lot and turned it into a lake. Again, thanks to Charlie Rooney's skills with the baggage stock, the show got away without loss or delay. This is the man that really saved the Robinson Circus during the season of 1924. At Pontiac on Friday many people from the Morris & Castle Shows attended. Flint was the Saturday stand with a light matinee and turnaway at night.

Monday, June 16, the John Robinson show played Bay City, Michigan, on what was considered a poor lot. It was the infield of the local race track of the Northeastern Michigan Fair Grounds.



The gasoline stake driver, with four spotted horses is shown in action on a Robinson lot in 1924. Burt Wilson collection.

It was a considerable distance from town with no street car service. However, there was bus service and plenty of space for automobile parking and a fine attendance resulted. Saginaw, the next day's town, offered a different problem. There, the parade had to travel a long distance. It left the lot at nine-thirty in the morning and did not return until after twelve. At the night performance, Billie Burton, who it will be remembered, was Wendy in the Spec and who was now working a mixed group of pumas and lionesses, was clipped by a puma on the neck. Although the wound bled profusely and the audience was shocked at her condition, she finished the act. At Owasso, a new situation was presented. There was a smallpox epidemic in the state, and on that date the State Health Commissioner grounded all circuses, street shows, and carnivals. The ban effected about fifteen shows that were then in Michigan. Although the future looked dark for a few hours, the officials of the circus obtained permission to finish the tour of Michigan which ended on Saturday. The show moved to Grand Rapids on Thursday and played the Hall and Buchanan Street lot and on Friday made the Muskegon stand. At this location there was a long haul to and from the runs plus a lengthy move of over one hundred miles to Benton Harbor. Consequently, the circus did not arrive for the Saturday stand until well after six o'clock in the morning. In this town the streets were also torn up for repairs and the first wagon did not get on the lot at the ballpark showgrounds until ten o'clock. The parade reached town at a little after noon but the doors opened at one-thirty for a good afternoon house.

The next Monday was spent at South Bend, Indiana. Although the show arrived early enough, a last minute change in lots caused a slight problem.

The new location, however, was near the center of town and positioned close to two street car lines. The 24-hour man had discovered a soft lot due to incessant rain and had ordered a great deal of work to be done to prepare it for the circus. It resulted in a good location, a rather soft lot, but good business. The next day, spent at Kendallville, offered no problems in spite of the small town. The lot was right in town. At Ft. Wayne, on Wednesday, the show played on the infield of the Cenlivre Driving Park. Just as the train arrived one of the worst rains of the tour descended on the area and the lot became a morass. Charlie Rooney declared that it was the worst lot he had seen in twenty years. Nevertheless, the parade went out at eleven o'clock and two performances were given. The next stand

Mrs. Ova Thornton is shown in the backyard on "Billy Sunday" just prior to the menage act on the Robinson show in 1924. Chang Reynolds collection.



was near the Idle Hour Amusement Park in Huntington, Indiana. At the end of the afternoon show, Bob Grant, one of Carlos Carreon's troupe, was belted severely in the midriff by the heels of one of the bronses and was confined to his train berth for over a week. Logansport was Friday's town with many visitors from Peru and the week ended at Danville, Illinois, with two good houses. The weather had changed for the better and Julian Rogers was overcome by the heat at this stand. Patricia Salmon substituted for her as prima donna in the Spec.

There were several changes in personnel at the end of June. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kline left and joined the Christy Bros. Circus. He was a clown and she rode in menage, in the hunting scene, and did work on the ladders. Fred Leslie, clown, also left and joined the same show. Nick Albanese assumed the responsibility for the Robinson dining car at Decatur. He had taken that position on the Hagenbeck show in 1906 and carried on in that job during the Hagenbeck-Wallace years. Mr. and Mrs. Chubby Guilfoyle left at Springfield, Illinois, on July 2.

The circus played Decatur to open its tenth week under canvas. Taylorville followed with Springfield on Wednesday. At Hannibal, Missouri, on Thursday, La Verne Hauser, who was working the leopard act for the first time that afternoon (following Mrs. Guilfoyle's departure) was severely clawed by one of the cats. She learned quickly that the spotted cats were many times faster than polar bears, and probably equally as ill-tempered. Quincy, Illinois, was the July 4 date and it featured a steep hill at the runs and a three-mile haul to the lot. The show was in early and began unloading at four o'clock in the morning. The parade was downtown by eleven. These early moves by the show brought out a capacity house in the afternoon and a well-filled tent at night. At Keokuk, there were two big houses in spite of the lot being situated far out with no street cars in the vicinity. Again the show faced hills but the 24-hour man had eased the problem by having loads of sand spread on the streets in order to give the teams a foothold.

Burlington, Iowa, was the date for July 7. It rained all morning, but stopped by eleven o'clock. A half-hour later the parade had reached the center of town. It remained overcast all afternoon and evening and a great amount of straw was used on this soft lot. The next day at Galesburg the Vedell showgrounds were used. Considering that the area was just recovering from one of the worst wind and hail storms in the history of Illinois, business was pretty good. The Peoria date was scheduled for Lakeview Park which meant that the show could unload on



the showgrounds. However, as the doors opened for the afternoon performance, a hard rain descended which turned the crowd away. The tent was filled at night. The Robinson show returned to Iowa on Thursday and played the Rockingham Road show grounds in Davenport. This lot was three miles from the center of town and the circus was able to unload about half-way between the lot and the city. At Muscatine the show again unloaded on the lot and two good houses were obtained. Iowa City was a good Saturday date.

During the next week this circus went to Hampton, Iowa on Monday; to Albert Lee, Minnesota, on Tuesday, and returned to Iowa for the rest of the week where it made stands at Charles City, Webster City, Boone, and Denison. The following week it was at Council Bluffs and Atlantic in Iowa; then to Omaha, Nebraska; and returned to Iowa for Red Oak and Creston. The Saturday date for that week was in St. Joseph.

During the last days of July there was a two-day stand at Kansas City followed by one-day dates at Falls City, Fairbury, Hastings, and McCook - the last four towns all in Nebraska. At Hastings the show experienced by far the worst rain and wind of the season. The rain began early in the morning but the parade went out in spite of the downpour. The wind started to blow in terrific gusts as the afternoon performance commenced. When the menagerie tent began to rip it was lowered to prevent additional damage. When the wind started up in strength, Cheerful Gardner and his men led the elephants outside and pegged them down. Thus the tent did not come down on them. The lead stock were taken out and secured also so that the canvas only rested on the cages. The next concern was the big top. All hands drove stakes madly and checked and re-checked the ropes. Meanwhile, Ed Woekener conducted the band in loud marches to cover the noise of the wind. The musicians played the tunes as loudly and as furiously as they could. The audience scarcely realized the

**This former Forepaugh-Sells highly carved tableau wagon carried the clown band in the 1924 Robinson parade. Don Smith collection.**

danger and the performers completed their abbreviated acts. The show recovered partially from the narrow escape and staggered on to McCook for Saturday.

The next week opened with a two-day stand in Denver, August 4-5. Here four good houses showed up in the big top. Pueblo and La Junta were equally successful but business was off in Raton, New Mexico, the only stand in that state. The show returned to Colorado after Raton and played Trinidad on Saturday.

The sixteenth week began at Colorado Springs with Boulder, Fort Collins, and Greeley filling the balance of the week. It was Sterling on Friday and to Scottsbluff, Nebraska, on Saturday. Another week of Nebraska dates followed - North Platte, Kearney, Grand Island, Columbus, Norfolk, and Fremont. The temperature had changed with the descent to the Plains and the thermometer jumped to over one hundred degrees. Billy Burton returned from the injury inflicted by the puma and one of Wink Weaver's baboons ran into the blues instead of out of the ring at the end of the act. Confusion in the blues!

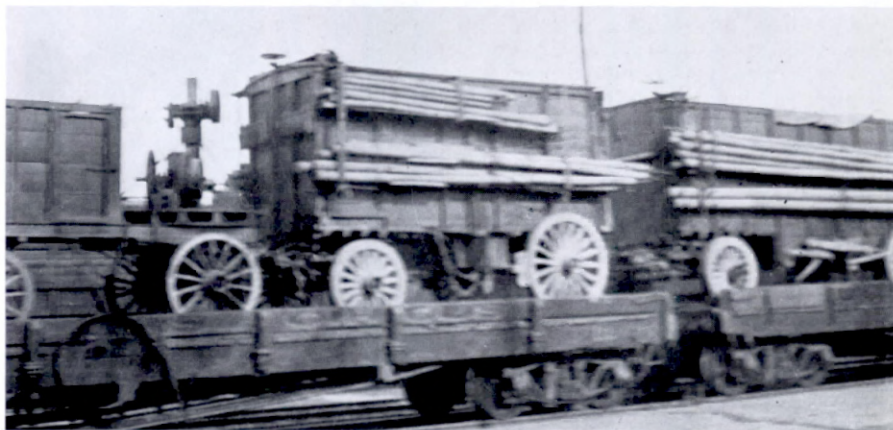
Lincoln, Nebraska, was the first

stand of the last week in August. Nebraska City was the Tuesday town, and at Atchison, on Wednesday, the show was late for the fourth time in 1924. It was about nine o'clock before the first wagon left the runs and the lot was a long distance away with a critical approach. The parade was in the center of town at twelve forty-five and the afternoon performance was on time. Leavenworth, Lawrence, and Ottawa completed the week. Jess Adkins was on the lot visiting friends at Saturday's town.

The John Robinson Circus was in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on September 1. The afternoon show had a fine crowd as expected on Labor Day but at six o'clock a heavy rain and strong wind descended upon the show and lasted for over three hours. Needless to say, the crowd at night was scarce. Pawhuska and Bartlesville in Oklahoma followed and then the show made three stands in Kansas - Coffeyville, Parsons, and Miami. It was during this week that Ernest Schumann left to join Hagenbeck-Wallace and Ola Donovan began to ride his high-school horse, "Yellow Jacket." She also began to work Schumann's sixteen-horse liberty act. This appeared opposite Rudy Rudynoff. Two of the elephants were on the pinnacle list but were working in spite of aches and pains. "Major" had a deep cut on his left front leg below the last joint. He had walked into an iron stake instead of moving around it. "Liz" had a stiff right hind leg - probably from an accident - rather than age.

"Buckles" Woodcock has estimated that the John Robinson Circus of 1924 included fourteen elephants in its herd; two more than the 1923 show. Of these, five adults and seven young worked during the performance. The fourteen included:

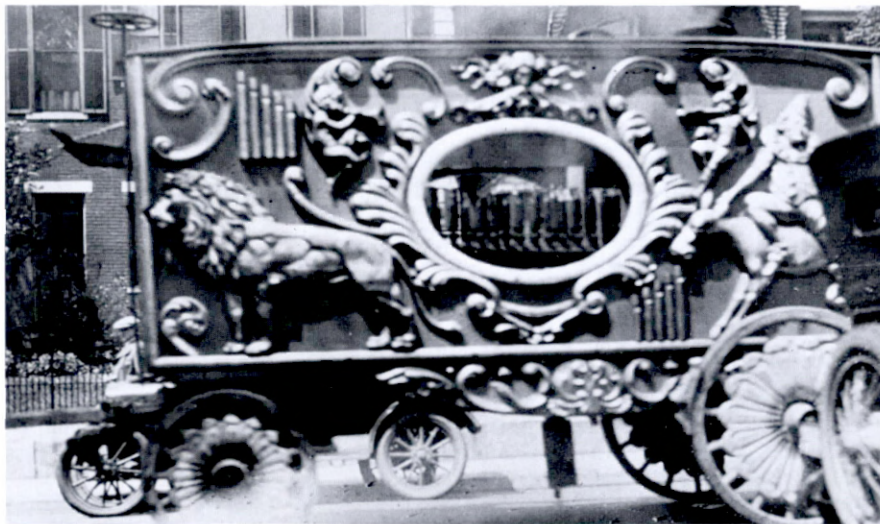
**John Robinson Circus loaded flat cars, about 1924. These were the wooden flats used by the show prior to receiving the new Mt. Vernon in 1928. Joe Bradbury collection.**



**MAJOR** — a fine male that had been the first Mugivan and Bowers elephant. He was purchased in 1904 for their Great Van Amburg Circus and was named for Major Gosney, one of the employees of the show. This animal remained with the Van Amburg show through 1908 and the next year was on their Howes' Great London Circus. There he remained while growing into a fine-looking tusker. When Mugivan and Bowers put out the John Robinson Circus in 1916, MAJOR was with it and remained with that show through 1924. He was sold to William P. Hall in 1925. While at the Lancaster farm in Missouri, he was used at various fairs and with the Cook and Cole Circus in 1927. MAJOR was trained, according to many reports, by Chris Zeitz who also broke "Snyder", the famous Sells-Floto male. Both could walk on their hind legs while carrying a trainer perched on one tusk. One of the most famous performers to do this act on the Robinson show was Irene Montgomery (Ledgett). In the fall of 1935, MAJOR, with "Trilby" and "Alice", were sold to the Cole Bros. Circus (Terrell and Adkins). During that winter this big male elephant injured Eddie Allen and Joe (Red) Powell at the quarters. As a result of these episodes, he was executed on 9 February 1936.

**BETTY** — had been with American circuses for many years. She had been brought to the United States by Hagenbeck at the close of the nineteenth century. She was an early purchase of Mugivan who reported that she was with his shows as early as 1913. She was transferred from Hagenbeck-Wallace to the John Robinson Circus for the 1919 season. At the end of 1924 the Robinson herd was transferred to the Hagenbeck-Wallace show and the Hagenbeck-Wallace bulls became part of the John Robinson Circus for 1925. The summary of the 1931 Hagenbeck-Wallace elephants states that she was 60 years old at that time. She died on tour with that show on 12 September 1935 at Iowa Falls.

**DUTCH** — was another aged female with a varied career. She was purchased from Thompson and Dundy of New York by the Norris and Rowe Circus. She was on that show when it folded in the spring of 1910 and ended up at the Hall farm after the fiasco of auctions that ended Norris & Rowe. Hall sold her to Fred Buchanan for his Yankee Robinson show and Jerry Mugivan owned her shortly after 1913-14. She was placed on the John Robinson Circus (from Hagenbeck-Wallace) for the 1919 tour. DUTCH remained with the Robinson show through 1924 and, of course, was switched to Hagenbeck-Wallace for 1925 and was still with that circus to its end. I saw this elephant several times in the late 1930s and early 1940s working at Goebel's place



This is the steam calliope used by John Robinson in 1924. The wagon is a re-built, with slight modification in the arrangement of the carvings, of the former Yankee Robinson steamer. The calliope with its original configuration had last been used in 1921 on the Howes Great London Show

at Thousand Oaks and at Venice, California. She was also used with some carnivals in the area. I have no report on her demise but apparently she was not with the group of elephants shipped to Ringling-Barnum quarters in January 1942. The 1931 Hagenbeck-Wallace inventory of elephants listed her as 58 years old at that time - probably some years older than her actual age.

**RUTH** — also was part of the Mugivan and Bowers Howes Great London show during the 1914-15 period. She went to the John Robinson Circus in 1916 and was with that show through 1924 when she was transferred back to Hagenbeck-Wallace at the end of the tour with the rest of the herd. Bill Woodcock and Ted Gallup have both placed her on the Hagenbeck-Wallace show for 1925-26. In 1927, while still with that circus, she was injured when hit by an interurban electric car. She was sold, or perhaps given, to the zoo in Lafayette, Indiana. She was listed at that zoo in 1941 by A. Morton Smith in his *White Tops* review for the year. She remained at the zoo until 1944 when Big Bob "Catfish" Stevens obtained her for his Bailey Bros. Circus. She died in winter quarters at Brady's Lake, Ohio, during the winter of 1944-45.

**BLANCHE** — according to some sources was imported as a youngster by Mugivan in 1910. The 1931 inventory of the Hagenbeck-Wallace elephants lists her age as 38 years at the time and states that she had been purchased from the Glasscock show in 1910. Regardless of her origin, she was with the Mugivan and Bowers circuses

and Van Amburgh's Trained Wild Animals. The remodeled wagon was used in 1922 on Gollmar Bros. Circus, and on John Robinson for the 1923-24-25 seasons. Tradition has it that the wagon was destroyed in a fire at the West Baden, Ind., quarters around 1927. Joe Bradbury collection.

for many years. She was on the John Robinson Circus (from Howes Great London) in 1916 and remained there through 1924. She then went to Hagenbeck-Wallace in the exchange and remained there until that show folded at Riverside, California, in 1938. She went to the Ringling-Barnum Circus and was one of the elephants that died of poison at the Atlanta, Georgia, stand. Walter McClain reported her as "about 40 years old" at that time.

**JENNIE** — was purchased by the American Circus Corporation in 1921 from Italy and was added to the John Robinson Circus in the spring of 1923 when the show arrived in Peru, before the opening of the season's tour. She, of course, was changed with the others to the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus at the end of the 1924 tour and remained with that show until the collapse at Riverside, California, in 1938. She was listed in the 1931 survey as being 22 years old. Somewhere along the way she lost an eye and was usually referred to as ONE-EYED JENNIE. On 15 September 1939, while the Ringling-Barnum show was in southern California she was added, with ten others, to the elephant herd of that circus. She remained with Ringling-Barnum until the end of the 1949 season and then was sold to the Mills Bros. Circus. The last information I have on this elephant is with the Mills Bros. Circus at Lakeville, New York, on 16 July 1965.

**LIZZIE** — was first purchased from a New York animal dealer in 1897 by the Campbell Bros. Circus. She was sold to William P. Hall in 1911. She was leased by Hall to the Barton & Bailey Circus in 1915; to Wheeler Bros. Circus in 1916;

to the R. T. Richards show in 1917 and 1918; to Coup & Lent for 1919. Bill Woodcock reported her on Howes Great London in 1920 and 1921 and on the Gollmar show in 1922. The Gollmar elephants became part of the 1923 John Robinson Circus herd and LIZZIE went to the Hagenbeck-Wallace show at the end of the 1924 tour with the rest of the Robinson elephants. She remained with that show until its demise in 1938 and was added to the Ringling-Barnum herd in September 1939. She died as a result of the poisoning at Atlanta, Georgia, in the fall of 1941. The 1931 Hagenbeck-Wallace inventory lists her age as 50 years.

PEARL — was included on the 1931 Hagenbeck-Wallace inventory as 20 years old with no accurate record of purchase. However, she was with the Gollmar Circus in 1922 and was recorded as a recently imported young elephant. Her record is similar to the others in that she became part of the John Robinson herd in 1923 and was transferred to the Hagenbeck-Wallace show at the end of the 1924 season. She remained with that show until 1938; was at the old Barnes' quarters in Baldwin Park; and then was added to Ringling-Barnum in September 1939. She was with the Big One through 1942. It has been related that PEARL was injured by the male elephant, RINGLING JOE, while on the Hagenbeck-Wallace show. The injury never healed and she was left in quarters for the 1943 season and executed on 11 March 1944.

JUDY — also came from the Gollmar Circus. She had been imported in 1922 and was very young. She was part of the 1923 Robinson herd and went to Hagenbeck-Wallace at the end of the 1924 season. She remained with that show through 1926 but I have no record of her after that year.

MODOC — gained fame from her work in films during the late 1960s and early 1970s, while at Africa, U.S.A. in Saugus, California. She was another young elephant imported for the Gollmar Circus in 1922; went to John Robinson in 1923 and 1924; and then to Hagenbeck-Wallace. In 1936 she became part of the Al G. Barnes herd and at the end of 1938 went to Sarasota with the other Barnes' elephants as part of the Ringling-Barnum show. She remained on R-B through 1948 and then was sold to the Biller Bros. Circus. She remained with Biller Bros. for two seasons and then went to the Overton Park Zoo in Memphis. After several years at the zoo she came to Africa U.S.A. In 1974, MODOC was at Knott's Berry Farm and in June 1975 had surgery on a foot. The operation was not a success and she was executed on 15 July 1975. This occurred at the San Francisco Zoo.

JEWEL — was still another youngster imported for the 1922 Gollmar Circus, and was placed on the



Elephants and camels in the 1924 John Robinson parade in McCook, Neb. Note the saddles used by the riders on the elephants. Joe Fleming collection.

Robinson show in 1923-24 and sent to Hagenbeck-Wallace at the end of the 1924 season. She remained with the Hagenbeck-Wallace herd until added to the Ringling-Barnum show in September 1939. She was active with that herd through 1951. The following year, she was taken to the Madison Square Garden date, but as only 19 elephants were taken on tour under canvas, she was sent back to quarters with four others. She remained in quarters until sold to Charles Garvin in the fall of 1956.

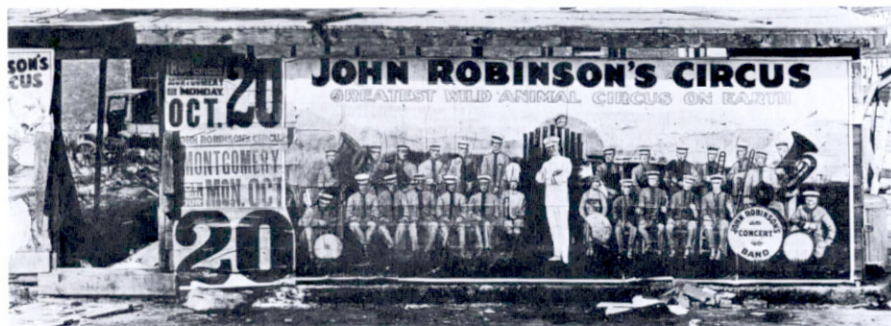
MARGARET — along with BLANCHE, came from the Glasscock shows to Howes Great London in 1910 (1931 inventory of Hagenbeck-Wallace elephants). She came to the John Robinson Circus in 1916 or 1917 and remained with that show's herd through 1922. She was on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1923, but back on John

Babe Gardner is shown on the right with elephants Judy and Babe. Margaret Thompson is on the left. Burt Wilson collection.



Robinson for 1924. The shift of the elephants at the end of the season put her back on Hagenbeck-Wallace for 1925 and there she remained through 1937. She was added to the Ringling-Barnum show for 1938 and 1939. When I studied the elephants on the Ringling-Barnum show in September 1939, MARGARET was ill. One attendant had her off in an outlying area away from the other elephants and the show equipment. As a result of this illness she was left at Baldwin Park when the show moved east. Later, in January 1942, she was sent with other elephants from Venice to Sarasota. Also, she was one of the elephants sent to Havana, Cuba, where a Ringling-Barnum unit played a six-week engagement in the fall of 1945. She was listed as 45 years old at that time. The 1931 Hagenbeck-Wallace inventory counted her as 32 years of age. In the spring of 1948, after the Madison Square Garden date, she was shipped to Italy.

BESSIE (BABE) — was listed on the 1931 Hagenbeck-Wallace inventory as 19 years old and that there was no accurate record of purchase. Woodcock reports that John Robinson Circus obtained an elephant from the Santos Y Argos Circus in Cuba in 1922;



the same year that Hagenbeck-Wallace purchased EVA and CROSS COUNTRY BABE from the same show. This Robinson elephant was named BESSIE. She was transferred to Hagenbeck-Wallace for 1923 and returned to the Robinson show for 1924. And, of course, she went back to Hagenbeck-Wallace at the end of that season. She stayed there through 1938. For some unknown reason, Cheerful Gardner changed her name to BABE about 1926 according to Ted Gallup. She was added to the Ringling-Barnum herd in September 1939 and remained with that show until 1966 when she was placed in the zoo at Hartford, Connecticut, in May.

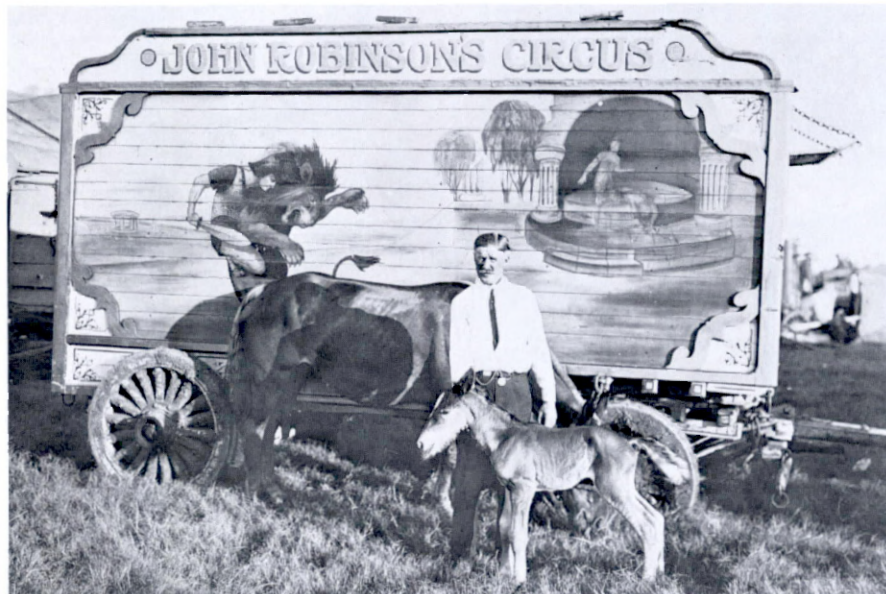
KATY — was on the Yankee Robinson Circus as early as 1917 and was part of its herd through 1920. Some reports include her on Indian Pete's Wild West Show at an earlier date. She remained on the Yank Show through 1920. In 1921 she was on the Howes Great London Circus and in 1922 with the Gollmar Circus. Bill Woodcock reported that "Gardner nearly killed her" in quarters at Montgomery, Alabama (winter 1922-23) and that she was left at Peru for the season. MAJOR, scheduled to travel with the Sells-Floto show that year, had made the mistake of taking a swing at Zack

**Large billing stand posted by the Robinson show in Montgomery, Ala., featured the show's concert band led by Eddie Woeckener. Joe Bradbury collection.**

Terrell before the show left quarters. As a result, MAJOR went out with John Robinson in place of KATE. In 1924 KATE was a part of the Robinson herd but was sold to the newly-formed 101 Ranch Wild West for 1925-1926. Art Eldredge of the Ranch Show changed her name to SUGAR, but it did not change her disposition and she was sent to the zoo at Fort Worth, Texas. She nearly killed a keeper at the zoo and was executed there in 1931.

With the elephant herd identified this article returns to week number twenty of the Robinson show tour of 1924. This week opened at Fayetteville, Arkansas, where Julian Rogers received a great welcome. She had been raised at Prairie Grove in that state and educated at the state university in this Monday's town — class of 1917. Ft. Smith was next and then the show

**Closeup view of No. 30 tableau used as the sideshow bandwagon. Charlie Rooney, Supt. of baggage stock stands with "Dallas" the colt born in Dallas, Texas, on Sept. 15, 1924. Pfening collection.**



returned west again to McAlester and Durant, Oklahoma. Friday and Saturday were spent in Denton and Bonham, Texas. At Denton it rained and rained; the parade was cut but two performances were given to fair houses. At Bonham, on Saturday, the lot was very soft and the parade was delayed an hour as the show was late getting onto the lot. The next Monday's stand was Dallas with big business. At this location, Duke Mills signed Captain Emerson, the giant boy from California. The newcomer was reported as being seven feet eight inches tall and having a weight of over 250 pounds. He was still under twenty years of age. The circus moved on to Terrell and Marshall in Texas and then to Shreveport and Monroe in Louisiana. It finished the week at El Dorado, Arkansas, and ran into the closing days of the month at Little Rock, Newport, Walnut Ridge, and Paragould (all Arkansas), and Poplar Bluff and Cape Girardeau, Missouri. It rained, as usual, during the week as the show unloaded, paraded, and put on its performances.

On Monday, 29 September, it finished with its Arkansas tour at Blytheville and went into Missouri where it played Kennett and Sikeston with good business at both towns. After loading at the last location, the show jumped 147 miles to Union City, Tennessee. The first run of over 97 miles was to Cairo, Illinois, where time was lost in the yards. The show arrived in Union City after nine o'clock on Thursday with everything late — unloading, setting-up, parade and the afternoon performance. Trenton was the Friday stand with Corinth, Mississippi, coming on Saturday.

The first four days of week number 24 were spent in Mississippi. West Point, Kesciuszko, Brookhaven, and McComb were the stands. Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana, completed the week. At McComb, "Egypt" Thompson took over as assistant manager. At New Orleans, on a lot located at Tulane and Carrollton Avenues, the show made a two-day stand. Three turnaways were registered in the two days. The loading and changing of railroads was made easily on Sunday night and the show reached Gulfport, Miss., for the Monday stand at seven the next morning.

The week of October 13-18, was spent in these towns: Gulfport, Hattiesburg and Laurel (in Mississippi); Mobile (Alabama) on Thursday; and Pensacola, Florida, and Andalusia, Alabama, on Friday and Saturday.

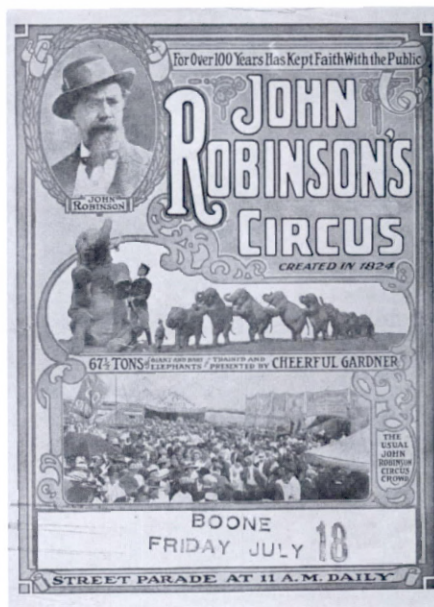
Week number twenty-five was spent entirely in Alabama at Montgomery, Troy, Opelika, Sylacauga, Anniston, and Selma. At Montgomery the show day and dated the Al G. Field Minstrel Show and at Opelika it was refused a parade permit. Since the lot was a half mile on the far side of town from the

unloading point, the show moved the wagons from the train directly across town to the lot and attracted as much attention as possible. Big business was the result.

Week 27 opened in Birmingham with more fine business. Ab Johnson, clown, left at this town, and joined the Mighty Haag Show. Tuscaloosa was next on the schedule. Then to Meridan, Jackson, Vicksburg, and Greenville, all in Mississippi. Dan Odom returned at Meridan to finish out the last few days of the season as manager.

Week 28, the last full week of the tented season of 1924 began at Clarksdale, Greenwood, Yazoo City, Canton, Starkville, and Columbus filled the rest of the week. The weather continued to be the best of the season for consecutive weeks and the show was doing fine business at each stand.

In the last week of the tour the John Robinson Circus played Tupelo, New Albany, and Jackson in Mississippi, and then went to Dyersburg, Tennessee, for the closing stand on Thursday, November 13 was the last day of the tour and from this point the circus made its run back to quarters. It will be recalled that in 1923, the Robin-



This gravure four page courier was used by the Robinson show during the 1924 season. It is for the Boone, Iowa, date. Pfening collection.

son Show left its winter quarters in Montgomery, Alabama, and went to Peru before opening the season. In 1924, this show left quarters in Peru before opening the season. In 1924, this show left quarters in Peru and at the end of the tour returned to still another winter residence — West Baden. On arrival there it had logged 13,453 miles for the season. Only one date was missed on account of a bad lot and rain. That town was Morgantown, West Virginia. The show arrived at its new quarters in West Baden about two a.m. on November 15.

*Billboard*, contained a report dated 20 December that announced that a "dozen or more elephants of the John Robinson Circus have been taken to Peru from West Baden, and housed in the winter quarters of the American Circus Corporation with their old comrades, the Sells-Floto elephants. The Hagenbeck-Wallace bulls have been sent to West Baden, where they will remain for the winter."

The writer wishes to acknowledge the valuable assistance given by Joe Bradbury, the late Bill Woodcock and Ted Gallup, and that of "Buckles" Woodcock which enabled this story to be successfully concluded.

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# *Season's Greetings*



TO

CIRCUS FANS AND FRIENDS  
EVERYWHERE

FROM

**RINGLING MUSEUM <sup>OF THE</sup> CIRCUS**

OF THE

JOHN AND MABLE RINGLING MUSEUM OF ART

SARASOTA, FLORIDA

WHERE A WARM WELCOME

ALWAYS AWAITS YOU



# CIRCUS TRADE CARDS

While used as early as the 18th century, trade cards, given away by merchants and manufacturers to advertise their products, reached their zenith in the 1870's and 1880's. Many branches of popular entertainment also used them, including minstrel shows, Tom shows, burlesque shows, and circuses. While they were never more than a minor form of advertising for circuses—a mere afterthought, perhaps, by the show owner after firming up the year's poster, courier, and herald order with the litho company—the surviving examples are colorful, often aesthetically pleasing, and on occasion, historically significant.

The earliest example I have seen is one for L. B. Lent in 1871, and the earliest one lithographed in color is for G. G. Grady in 1873. Most of the cards from the 1870's are 2 1/4" x 4" while those of the 1880's are somewhat larger. Most of the larger circuses of the 1870's and 1880's used them including Barnum, Forepaugh, Cooper & Bailey, Howes, Coup, Doris, and others. Adam Forepaugh appears to be the genre's greatest devotee. Their use dramatically declined after the mid-1880's, and the most recent example I know of is for Downie and Wheeler about 1913. Cards were used, however, in other industries until the 1940's.

The same lithograph houses that printed circus posters also did trade cards as did firms unfamiliar to circus historians. Strobridge and Courier printed them, as did Avil Printing of Philadelphia and Clay, Cosack & Co. in Buffalo. Many cards appear to be stock designs.

Printing companies sold the cards for two or three cents apiece, which may in part account for their lack of popularity by showmen. Twice that amount could buy a one sheet lithograph which would advertise the show to many times the number of people that would see a trade card picked up at the dry goods store or druggist.

One imagines a circus's billposter giving a shop keeper a stack of the cards and asking

**A scantily clad lady rider defies the laws of gravity for G. G. Grady in 1873. This early trade card was printed by Warren, Johnson & Co., of Buffalo, New York, which became the Courier Company a few years later.**



This attractive 1875 card from Montgomery Queen has an ad for Merchant's gargling oil on the back.

him to pass them out to his customers or leave them on his counter. Because trade cards rarely give the date the show was to appear, one assumes that they had to be used in conjunction with other types of advertising that always gave the performance date. In this manner the paying public received one further re-enforcement that the circus was coming to town.

While most circus trade cards had examples of the press agent's genius on the back, many had advertisements for gargling oil, patent medicine or some other non-circus related product. One speculates that manufacturers sought out circuses rather than the other way around, as the circus, playing perhaps 200 cities in 20 states, was an excellent medium to reach a mass market for a product sold nationally. A curious switch on combined ads was an 1890 card featuring a pride of lions underneath a banner for



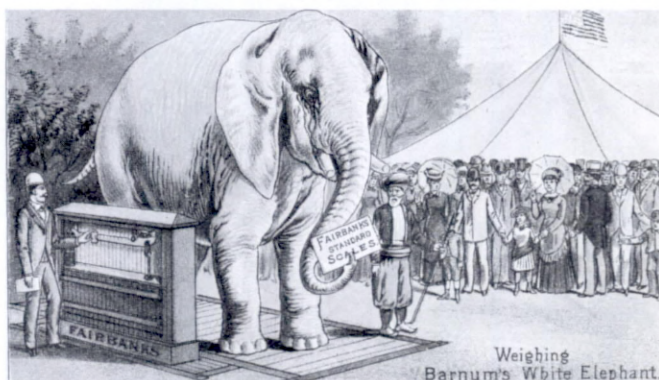
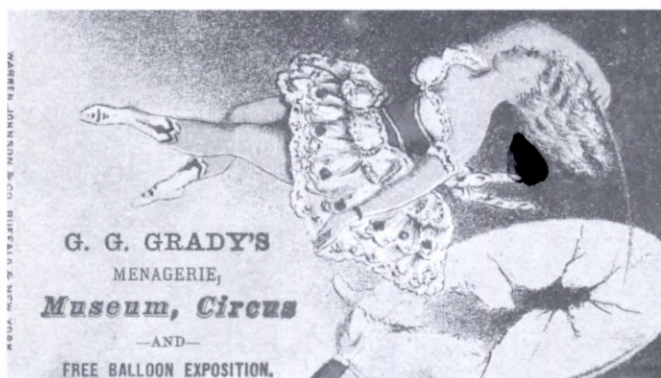
Adam Forepaugh got double duty out of this card, which featured a picture of his elephant band on the front. This text is typical of the backs of trade cards, and dates from the mid-1880's.

Hood's Sarsaparilla on the front, and a pitch for the Forepaugh show on the back. One suspects this particular card was handed out by the show's ticket takers or concessionaires on the lot rather than in a store.

Retail and manufacturing companies found circus scenes and personalities popular ways to sell their products through trade cards. Louise Montague sold Warner's Corsets in 1882, and two years later Barnum's white elephant sold Fairbanks Scales. About the same time a trapeze artist sold hams, and a clown and lady rider coffee, neither of which have any connection with any existing circus.

Special note must be made of Jumbo, probably America's greatest non-human

**In 1884 the Fairbanks Scale Co. used the famous white elephant war to publicize their products. Donaldson Bros. of New York printed this card.**





This female wire walker poses above W. W. Cole's tents in the late 1870's. Cole must not have had a good press agent that year as the back of this card is blank. All illustrations from the Pfening Collection.

huckster before Morris the Cat. In the 1880's his picture appeared on at least twenty different styles of cards selling every conceivable product from baking powder to nuts and bolts. Oddly enough, the Barnum and London Circus didn't distribute trade cards, at least I have never seen one. In Jumbo's case they didn't need to.

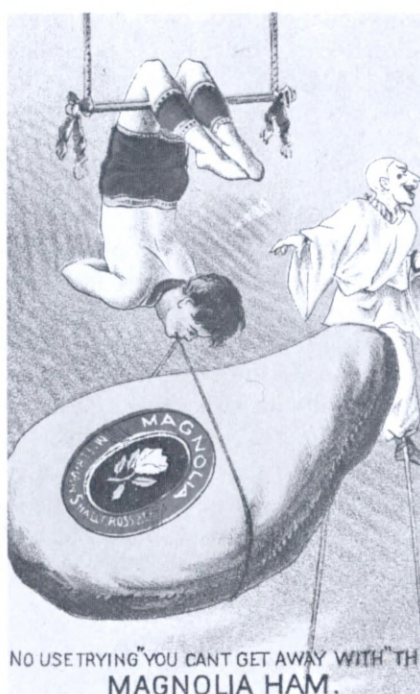
Trade cards have become increasingly popular collectibles in recent years. Because they were saved like baseball cards are today they are relatively plentiful in antique shops and flea markets. I remember seeing two or

This card was printed by Warren, Johnson & Co. for Howes Great London in the mid-1870's. The back assures people they will soon see the finest circus of their lives.



This Downie and Wheeler card from the 1910's is a throwback to an earlier era. Very few circus trade card exist after the mid-1880's.

three boxes of them in a Philadelphia antique shop about fifteen years ago. While only a minuscule percentage of those printed were circus related, either directly or indirectly, their colorful pictures and equally flamboyant texts make them interesting additions to any circus collection. Fred D. Pfening III



This card has no apparent tie-in with an existing circus, and is typical of the use of a circus scene to sell a product. It was printed by the Krebs Lithographing Company of Cincinnati, probably in the 1880's.



This 1874 card, besides advertising the Barnum show and a news stand, has a King of the Blood patent medicine ad on the back.

James A. Bailey was not above a little title stealing as shown in this late 1870's card printed by Warren, Johnson & Co. This card appears to be a stock design.



## **"NO PERFORMANCES TODAY"**

### **The Disastrous Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus Train Wreck of 1918.**

**By Warren A. Reeder, Jr.**

An account of the events leading up to, during and following the train wreck of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus train and a Government Troop Train at Ivanhoe (Tower), Indiana, 4 A.M. June 22, 1918. 137 pages, over 100 photos drastically present this historic event.

Limited edition \$4.50 per copy.

Hammond Historical Society  
260 165th Street  
Hammond, Indiana 46324

How often have you dreamed of owning your own full size horse drawn circus wagon? Send SASE for further details to GRESHAM, 2711 Wells St., Fort Wayne, Ind. 46808.

## **CIRCUS LIFE IN PICTURES**

A beautiful picture book, 6 x 9 inches, 100 glossy pages, 100 glossy photos of scenes on 6 different circuses during the 1920's and 1930's. Beginning with the time you read this ad and until Jan. 15, 1981 you can order this beautiful picture book as a Christmas Special, plus 2 bonuses for only \$4. A picture of myself taken in the mid 1920's when I was a gymnasium instructor and a student in college studying Physical Education, and, 3 pages, 8½ x 11 inches, of important happenings on the 1930 Sells-Floto circus taken from my daily diary, such as, the circus train going through tunnels, crossing the Chesapeake Bay on large barges, going down that famous horse-shoe bend near Altoona, Pa., crossing over into Canada and a month long engagement in the Chicago Coliseum and Stadium and much more. After Jan. 15, 1981 this picture book will again be \$5. You can only get this circus picture book from me, the author. It could also be a Christmas present for someone, especially children.

**Johnnie Schmidt**

**Route 3, Box 170-A**

**Lindale, Texas 75771**

Merry Christmas  
from

UNDER THE  
WORLD'S LARGEST  
TRAVELING BIG TOP

# CIRCUS VARGAS



GREAT IN '80  
GREATER IN '81  
"A Leader In Its Field"

# A VERY TURBULENT CIRCUS SEASON, 1938

by Robert Hasson

*FORWARD: First off, I want the reader to know that I am not and have never been a professional writer. In putting together this article, I researched issues of the Billboard for news items that I have incorporated in this story and at the same time, to refresh my memory of forty two years ago. Following the published Billboard news items, in some instances, I have gone into some details pertaining to the occasion or event. This story primarily concerns the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, but on a few occasions, I have brought in other show news relative to the situation and times.*

I would like to begin this story a couple of years earlier, May 1936 to be exact, to familiarize one with my association with the circus world. Having started as a 'side show talker' at the Chicago Century of Progress in 1933, my one great ambition was to be a talker for Clyde Ingalls on the Greatest Show on Earth. I had attained success as a carnival side show talker but the circus world was a new challenge for me. The next day after the circus arrived in Philadelphia on May 26, I found

This handbill was passed out on the Ringling-Barnum showground in Brooklyn, N.Y., on May 13, 1937. Ralph Whitehead, the union organizer, was upset and accused the show of not collecting union dues. Circus World Museum collection.

## Monster Circus Mass Meeting

ATTENTION!  
RINGLING BROTHERS  
BARNUM & BAILEY CIRCUS  
EMPLOYEES:-

The American Federation of Actors, a national organization operating in all cities from coast to coast, and embracing circuses, carnivals, fairs, night clubs, vaudeville, etc., is ready to extend the facilities of its gigantic organization to promote your economic and social welfare.

The Wagner National Labor Relations Act guarantees you the right to choose your representatives for the purpose of collective bargaining. Never before in the history of the labor movement has the government ever guaranteed the workers the right to affiliate with a labor organization, free from coercion by their employers.

At this important meeting we shall demonstrate through mass attendance, our challenge to the circus owners that we must have higher wages and decent living conditions. The abuses long practiced by the Management are well known to you. This is your opportunity to affiliate with an organization that carries with it the largest membership in the entertainment world.

BE SURE TO ATTEND. BRING YOUR FELLOW WORKERS WITH YOU. REMEMBER THE DATE! REMEMBER THE PLACE!

To-Night, Thursday, May 13, 1937

STARTING AT 10 O'CLOCK

Ridgewood Grove Stadium

Palmetto St. and St. Nicholas Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Walk Straight Down Cypress Ave. to Palmetto St.

American Federation of Actors  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS: 1560 BROADWAY, NEW YORK CITY  
CIRCUS EMPLOYEES' DIVISION

myself at the 11th & Erie Avenue circus grounds. I introduced myself to Clyde Ingalls and inquired if he was in need of any 'talkers'. He wanted to see how good I was and pointed to a ticket box next to the big bally stage. I immediately became acquainted with the occupant of that ticket box, Harry Lewiston, who coached me in a fatherly way during the opening I made with the Doll Family of midgets on the bally. At the end of the opening I was thrilled at the size of the crowd that was lining up to buy tickets, which later I found out that this was the usual thing to happen in Philadelphia regardless who made the side show opening as this town was a natural for side shows. I guess my enthusiasm got the best of me seeing all the people buying tickets because I took the handkerchief from my jacket pocket and began waving it toward the entrance as a means of direction. That is when Harry kicked me in the shin and told me in no uncertain terms that 'we' didn't use those carnival tactics around here.

I didn't get to be with the circus that year but I did join the following year in Hartford, Conn., June 17. I would have joined sooner but I had a previous commitment to fulfill. That season was a memorable one for me as I met a lot of wonderful showpeople. Experienced executives, performers and workingmen that I shall long remember.

It was during the week of May 24, 1937 in Philadelphia that the Ringling Bros., and Barnum & Bailey Circus joined the American Federation of Actors' union. This made the Ringling Circus and Cole Bros. the only two shows unionized at the time by Ralph Whitehead. The Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus employees formed their own independent union in June with George Davis, cookhouse steward, as President. It was not a 'commissioned union' but it was formed to safeguard the interests of the employees. Dues were fifty cents a month.

The *Billboard* issue of November, 1937 had the following item: The operation and management of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus reverted to the estate of John Ringling at a meeting in Washington, D.C., on November 4, when Allied Owners Inc., holder of a mortgage, already paid down to \$800,000, was satisfied. Amount was paid through a refinancing program and also thru cooperation of the government, which held

large bond and stock assets of the Ringlings. A new note and mortgage were issued to Manufacturers Trust Company of New York.

I had heard during the 1937 season that this would be the last year that anyone could expect Sam Gumpertz to be head of the circus. I understood at the time that he was made the general manager three years prior by Allied Owners Inc., to protect and oversee their interest involving the Circus. Sam Gumpertz was a wonderful human being and I am glad that I was privileged to know him.

The North Brothers, John and Henry, arrived in Sarasota on January 1, 1938 and immediately took over the reins of Ringling Bros. Circus. It didn't take long for them to start making changes in circus personnel. They replaced S. L. (Buster) Cronin with George W. Smith as general manager on the A. L. G. Barnes Circus; sent Ike Robertson, to the Barnes Show as the new treasurer.

The January 22 issue of the *Billboard* stated: Ralph Whitehead, executive secretary of the American Federation of Actors revealed that on December 24, 1937, The AFA and Ringling Bros., and Barnum & Bailey Circus signed a closed shop agreement affecting the show's quarters at Sarasota, Florida and Peru, Ind. Contract was signed by Whitehead for the union and Carl T. Hathaway for the circus, calls for a minimum wage for workers at quarters of not less than \$7.00 a week plus board and lodging. Contract expires May 31, 1942.

Samuel W. Gumperts, manager of the Greatest Show on Earth, standing on office wagon steps talks with Pat Valdo in 1937. Burt Wilson collection.



At this point I would like to inject some line to the performance of the "Greatest Show on Earth" for the 1938 season. The feature attraction this year was a gorilla bought from a lady in Coney Island that had raised it from infancy but was too large for her to handle in her present surroundings. It was not huge in size for a gorilla, at the time there were three others in Zoos around the U.S.A. that were larger. But this gorilla, due to an accident, had an indenture in his upper lip that gave him a ferocious appearance and the circus storymen and press agents played it to the hilt. The name, "Gargantua the Great" was conceived by Henry (Buddy) North. A very elaborate cage wagon was constructed in the circus shops by that master mechanic, William Yeske at a cost of several thousand dollars. The wagon was 25 feet long and weighed nearly nine tons. There was a compartment on the pole end that had sleeping accommodations for the keeper and a generating plant that kept the temperature in the cage at a constant 70 degrees. A four foot section at the other end of the cage was used for the gorilla when the display part of the wagon had to be cleaned. This section also was used by Richard Kroener where he would be unseen by the audience holding a toy snake to force the gorilla to stay in the center of his compartment so the people could get a good look at him while the cage was being pulled around the hippodrome track. During this period, Frank Buck would be standing at a microphone in front of the bandstand narrating how this beast was captured in the wilds and "Brought Back Alive."

The *Billboard* issue of March 19 stated: The American Federation of Musicians signed a new contract with Ringling Bros. Circus for a minimum of 26 men in the band at a salary of \$42.50 for a six day week and \$65.50 for the band leader; side show musicians to be paid \$24.00 and the leader \$40.00.

In the same issue another item of news was that John North was the first Ringling to head up the show since 1932, when his uncle John relinquished control of his holdings to outside financial interests. With other members of the family and the Manufacturers Trust Co. of New York, John North paid notes in full amounting to \$823,000 on the circus interests. They also bought back a 10% bonus held by the previous owners and the Ringling-Barnum and Barnes-Sells-Floto, the other show involved, returned to the heirs of the original Ringling Bros.

Press notices in the New York papers stated that the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus opened in Madison Square Garden on April 8 to rave acclaim and the run was for 23 days.



John Ringling North, the new President of the Ringling-Barnum Circus in 1938. He is shown late in the 1938 season on the Al G. Barnes Circus. Burt Wilson collection.

The truth of the matter is, except for Gargantua, the Cristianis, the opening "Spec" Nepal and the restyling of the wardrobe by Charles LeMaire, the performance was a carbon copy of the previous season under the management of Sam Gumpertz. The Zacchini Cannon act was certainly missed at the closing compared with the horse, pony and chariot races. Opening performance ran 4¼ hours.

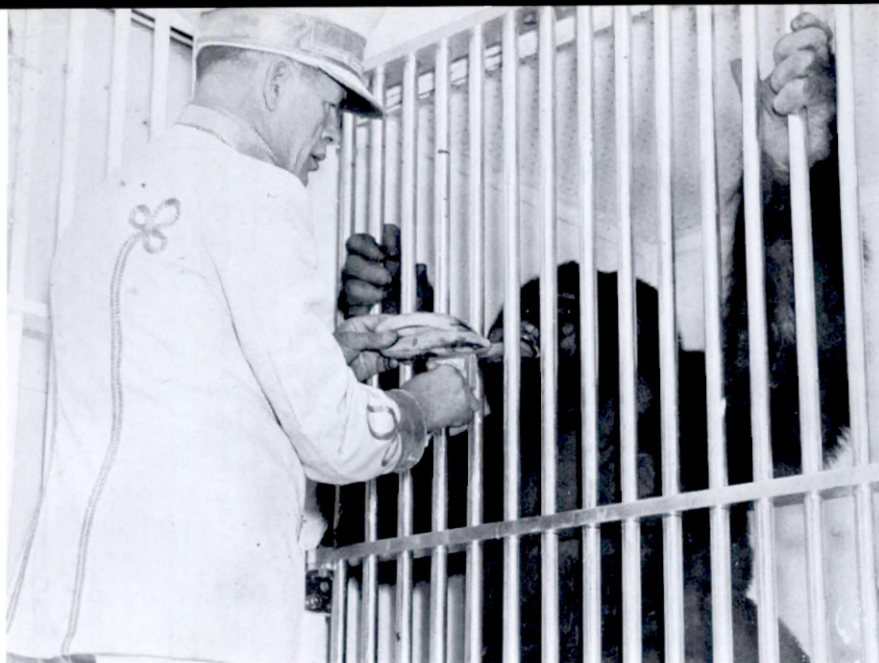
The Big Show experienced its first union confrontation on April 12 when over 200 working men in various departments went on strike before the Tuesday evening performance. The walkout, caused chiefly by a difference

John North returned to the Strobridge Litho Co. in 1938 for a number of new poster designs. This opening spec bill featured Frank Buck and designer Charles LeMaire. Pfening collection.

in interpretation of a five year union contract signed in May of 1937 with the American Federation of Actors. The contract, signed by Sam Gumpertz, called for a \$60.00 minimum throughout the season with no particular stipulation for winter-quarters work or indoor dates. A separate contract was signed by Carl Hathaway, just prior to his death, creating a \$7.00 a week minimum at quarters and it was this rate that John North planned to follow at New York and Boston, claiming the \$60.00 would go into effect when the show opened under canvas.

At a mass meeting after the April 12 matinee the men voted to strike, although the original contract stipulated that there should "be no lockouts or strikes during this agreement," and that any disputes between employer and the union that could not be settled amicably in ten days, be referred to a board of arbitration. As the strike approached the 24 hour mark, Arthur S. Meyer of the Mediation Board, North and Ralph Whitehead of the AFA, went behind





**Richard D. Kroener, superintendent of Gargantua the Great, is pictured with his charge in 1938. Bob Hasson collection.**

closed doors for negotiations and arrived at an agreement nearly eight hours later. Terms of settlement re-established the original contract of May 1937 and created a \$45.00 a month minimum wage for the New York and Boston engagements, as well as payment at that rate for the four days preceding the first canvas date, which was at Brooklyn. The \$45.00 rate was called retroactive for all workers on the show from the day they left winter-quarters. The original contract would be in effect for five years, the new one for one year. North claimed that trouble in New York could easily have been averted had Whitehead conferred with the circus at its Sarasota quarters during the winter.

An item in one of the New York papers dated April 13 read: The old saying "The show must go on" was proven again Tuesday night at the Garden. Without the aid of the 200 working men who went on strike, the performance started on time at 8:30 to a good three quarter house. It was a performance minus routine and most of the animals from "Spec" to finish. Frank Buck walked in "Nepal" instead of entering astride Modoc, the elephant; equestriennes marched afoot and the Bengal Lancers trudged in the rear.

The arena was full of activity with performers, staff men, freaks and even customers doing their best to help where ever needed. The North Brothers worked alongside Jack Earle, the side show giant and Clyde Ingalls, side show boss. Art Concello took care of his own rigging and assisted with other up-in-the-air turns. Austin King, side show lecturer, and his co-workers kept the menagerie floor clean for two days.

Wednesday's two performances showed a marked development. A patron unaware of the circumstances would hardly notice that the circus was being presented without the aid of

nearly 200 experienced employees.

The first real casualty of the 1938 season came with the closing of the brand new Tim McCoy Wild West Show in Washington, D.C. on May 7 after three weeks operation. Washington was the scene of another Wild West Show closing, the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch in 1931.

Ringling Bros. was facing possibly more trouble on opening in Brooklyn under canvas. Whitehead accused the circus of not cooperating with the union by refusing to collect dues. Performers claimed that they received little benefit from membership in the AFA since joining.

From the *Billboard* dated May 14: Ringling Bros. Circus opened under canvas at a new location in Brooklyn at Utica & E. New York Avenues. Business was below the previous year's gross. Anticipating low grosses for the season, the circus requested a substantial cut in the \$60.00 a month minimum wage scale. North and Whitehead met in private talks early in the week to discuss differences.

North took a firm stand stating increased cost of the show cannot be met this year with general conditions as they are and a cut in salaries would be essential. It was rumored that North had threatened to send the show back to Sarasota should the union refuse to meet his request for reduced wages.

Whitehead indicated that he would be in favor of a decrease in the \$60 wage rate provided the union members, including billposters, musicians and press agents took similar reductions. Whitehead stated, however, that he would not recommend a cut as drastic as North proposed.

First step in settlement, the union demanded, is for the show to live up to its contract by having all of its eligible

personnel members of the AFA in good standing. About 70 performers refused to join the union and nearly that number again refused to pay their dues. AFA took the stand that until the closed shop agreement is effected, it cannot negotiate for a temporary wage cut or change in the original contract.

Ill feelings and tension arising between performers and working men could easily cause another strike. Actors maintained that the Ringling Bros. Circus had always been fair with them and they resented outsiders stepping in and trying to run the show.

Just about this time there were happenings on other fronts. On May 14, the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus was having trouble in Pittsburgh, Pa., with the union picketing the show. Whitehead was trying to force a closed shop contract with Hagenbeck-Wallace.

Charles Sparks had an ad in the May 21 issue of the *Billboard* to sell the Downie Bros. Circus and would consider leasing the show to responsible parties. The show was playing in New Jersey at the time the ad appeared. Finally, the Downie Bros. Circus became the second casualty of a major circus to close. It folded in Portsmouth, Va., on June 4 and returned to quarters.

In Washington, D.C., creditors were suing the McCoy Show and wanted it adjudged Bankrupt. Meanwhile back in Pittsburgh, the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus and the AFA were battling their differences in court. The outcome of which AFA was enjoined from picketing the circus in Pennsylvania. The show filed two additional damage suits.

From the *Billboard* issue of June 18, an article stated that after John North was informed by Ralph Whitehead, that neither he nor the working men wished to have a reduction in wages, Mr. North addressed the personnel of the show at Pittsburgh on June 6. The full text of his speech follow: "Members of all of the departments of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, I am here to address you because your representative, Mr. Ralph Whitehead, has informed me that neither he nor you wish to have a 25 per cent reduction in your wages. Well, to start with I will say in all honesty that it is without pleasure that I have asked you to take such a reduction in your wages, but I must add that necessity is often without pleasure.

"I am speaking to you as the representative of the management of this corporation. I am responsible for the welfare, success and continuation of this organization to its board of directors and to its owners. The purpose of this enterprise, if perhaps some of you have never paused to analyze it, is to bring entertainment to a large cross section of the American public and by doing so to return to the

corporation a fair profit. In order to accomplish this purpose, it is necessary to purchase large quantities of materials, employ many men and engage large numbers of performers. The materials must be paid for, the equipment repaired, replaced and maintained, and the employees, working men and performers alike fed and transported from one end of the country to the other. All of this, as you all know, must and does require expenditure of a great deal of money. You also must know that in good times the circus does big business and makes good money, but that should not seem unreasonable for that is its just due. In fact, up to this time the show has made sufficient money to winter it. There must be many of you here familiar with the old circus expression that 'if a circus hasn't its profit by the 1st of July, it very likely will go home without it'. The reason for this is a very simple and sound one. Due to competition, all the shows start out in the territory that seems the best for box office receipts and plays said territory as thoroughly as possible. Then naturally must come many weeks when receipts are far from consistent. In order to play good cities such as the large ones on the west coast, it is necessary to pay high railroad charges and play many towns which the management knows in advance won't bring enough to offset the daily expenses. So even in good normal times a show often considers itself fortunate to get back in quarters still holding the bank balance established way back in July.

"And these gentlemen, are not normal good times. Prices are high for food stuffs and materials. Taxes are high and railroad rates are high. Hence the expense of daily maintenance is higher than good times and the take at the ticket wagons is naturally less than when factories are operating that are now closed and people are working who are now amongst the 12,000,000 or 13,000,000 unemployed.

"I sincerely wish it were not my duty to paint such an unhappy picture of current national conditions. I should much rather be appearing before you to offer you a raise rather than asking you to cooperate by taking a cut, for if such were the case it would mean that times were good, that millions were not unemployed and on meager relief and it would mean that the circus was making money and could afford to share more of its profits with you all who certainly share in making them possible. But I would be both a fool and a liar were I to read you figures that would indicate that we can expect big business and big profits. Besides the evidence of bad times ahead is the immediate fact that the circus must meet certain financial obligations. As a result of the preceding depression, it

was necessary for my Uncle John to become involved with the bankers. I might say in passing that considerable of his financial grief was caused by his desire to keep as many as humanly possible of the small shows on the road during the depression in order not to throw any people out of work. The Big Show paid for the little shows' losses and still owes money. By careful management this debt and others can and will be paid off, for it is my job to see to it that the great organization which my uncle built doesn't end up under the hammer on some railroad siding.

"Last year you men received a raise in pay that, in some instances, amounted to 100 per cent. The circus paid that increase last year and has paid it so far this season. I now repeat that I receive no satisfaction from having to ask you to take a 25 per cent reduction, save perhaps the satisfaction of knowing that at least for you here that want to work—I am, I hope, assuring you of work with a fair living wage for the remainder of the season and if I receive your cooperation, I believe this season will be as long as usual and I'd like to think that it might also mark a return to that old order of things around here when many of you who are still here were proud to be working men with the Greatest Show on Earth.

"I hope you will discuss this among yourselves and also with your department heads. Thank you for coming. Thank you for listening."

North's appeal was made at the Monday dinner hour from a raised platform in the center of the big top, flanked by

This sixteen sheet poster featuring Frank Buck was used to advertise the final stand of the Ringling-Barnum 1938 tour, June 22, Scranton, Pa. Eddie Jackson photo.

crew bosses and circus officials. The address was later printed in pamphlet form and a copy given to everyone with the show. The introductory to the printed address read as follow: "It has been brought to the attention of the management that a number of people in our organization were unable to appear at the meeting called by the president in Pittsburgh on June 6. The management is desirous of having everyone with the show know exactly what was said at this meeting by Mr. North in the hope that a better feeling of cooperation between the management and the circus personnel may be effected."

The city of Pittsburgh was extra circus conscious due to newspaper front page stories anent John Ringling North's request to Ringling-Barnum employees intent mass meeting to accept a 24 per cent cut in wages or face possibility of circus folding for the season.

Plea for wage economy precipitated feud with AFA president Ralph Whitehead, who after following the circus to Pittsburgh from Harrisburg, where he had unsuccessfully tried to reach concord in session with North, petitioned hurriedly called meeting of several hundred workmen at the St. Moritz Hotel to resist slash.

Third party entered dispute when Steward Joseph Boyton, of the Theatrical Managers, Agents and Treasurers' Union, claiming to represent section of circus employees, defended management's economy attempt and accused Whitehead of being "a damn Bolshevik." He asserted he will present charges of "muscling in" against Whitehead, in commenting about Boyton, said, "that's the nearest thing to a company union attitude I ever saw."

After being in Pittsburgh three days and conferring with North only about



once in that time, Whitehead left for Washington, D.C., confident that "they'll keep the show open and pay the regular wages according to the five year closed shop contract we negotiated last year."

Refuting North's contention that attendance has been down, the AFA head admitted North's statement that the show is in debt, but added, "it isn't anything like a 77-B proposition. They have already had a fine season and they are just getting into real circus weather and real circus towns."

Headlines, in big type, on the circus page of the June 25 issue of the *Billboard* announced a "STRIKE ON RINGLING-BARNUM."

A *Billboard* article dated June 18 from Erie, Pa., where the show played on June 15, reads as follows: According to George W. Smith, general manager of the circus and John Ringling North, the trouble started at Toledo on Tuesday when one of the superintendents in charge of baggage stock went to the time keeper's wagon and asked to be paid off, claiming he was unable to control his men. The super., who has been with the show for many years, refused to stay and a short time later 67 of the baggage stock crew also obtained their time.

New tractors purchased at Philadelphia and other motor equipment were used to get the show off the lot and onto the train, with a delay of about an hour. Trouble however was encountered in loading stock cars, because some horses, which are kickers and biters, have to be put in certain positions in the cars. After one car had been loaded and unloaded five times, someone suggested letting the horses find their own places. This was done and the scheme worked.

Mrs. Charles Ringling talked to the show employees asking that they remain on the job so "the show could go on." Photo taken in Scranton, Pa. Pfening collection.

With the trains loaded after the cookhouse and menagerie, the train was well on its way here when it was discovered that 27 air hoses on the cars had been cut. A four hour delay was caused while new equipment was installed and the entire four sections checked.

The first section arrived in Erie at 7:45, but the other sections didn't get in until 11:30 with the Pullmans arriving shortly after noon. Unloading was speeded and an army of boys engaged to quickly help spread and rig the various tents. At 4:45 the matinee started to a half house, many having gone home after the long wait and because of fear of further labor trouble. The night show was capacity.

I would like to inject a comment at this point in the story. When the trouble arose with the 'hostlers' in Toledo, Captain John Sheesley was playing on the other side of town with his railroad carnival and that evening he sent his drivers and rubber tired tractors to the circus lot to assist the show in getting off and loaded.

The following item from the *Billboard* dated June 20, Syracuse, N.Y. was the last before the final blow came two days later in Scranton: Anticipated showdown in the war between the AFA and Ringling-Barnum Circus over a 25 per-cent pay cut ordered last Friday in Rochester by President John Ringling North was averted here today and will come instead in Scranton, Pa., Wednesday.

Action of the union was to have been taken yesterday when the pay cuts went into effect, but at Watertown Saturday, just before the show pulled out for Syracuse, union men on the lot were advised by AFA to wait until the first reduced pay envelopes were handed them. That meant the union would go along until Saturday, June 25, when the pay envelopes would be distributed at Paterson, N.J. However, yesterday North posted a notice on the

lot here thanking the men "for taking the cut." Immediately union spokesmen denied they had taken it and a few hours later it was announced that Ralph Whitehead, of the AFA would meet with the employees in Scranton on Wednesday. North's notice, which angered the workmen said:

"To all employees of Ringling Bros., and Barnum & Bailey, Inc.: The management wishes to thank you all for the prompt action you have taken in accepting the 24 per-cent reduction in pay, which acceptance has resulted in the show not closing today. The management regrets that a few of its employees have left, but is most gratified to see that almost to a man you have remained.

"The moment you decided upon this course, surmounting an impending crisis, you won the profound respect and admiration of every showman in the amusement world. You have proved once more the truth of the time honored phrase, 'The show must go on'."

Questioned about the union's denial of his statement, North said, "We posted a notice two days ago that the circus would close if the reduction was not accepted. Since all employees were working today, I assume they have accepted the reduction."

Sunday was the first day of work under the reduced pay. Both union officials and circus authorities agreed that none of the performers or other higher salaried employees had quit. All have accepted the cut except the several hundred working men.

Although North was positive in saying the show would close if reductions were not accepted when he made the

Ticket seller Joe Boyton is shown in Scranton with a mob wanting their refunds after the performance failed to appear. Photo from August 11, 1938, KEN magazine. Bob Hasson collection.





first announcement at Rochester, he was not so definite here today. Asked if a probable refusal of the cut at Wednesday's meeting in Scranton would mean closing, North hedged, saying, "We will face that situation if and when it arises."

The headline on the first page of the *Billboard* dated July 2 read as follows: **STRIKE CLOSES "BIG SHOW"—Ringling-Barnum Circus Goes Back To Barn When Majority Refuses 25% Cut.** Here is the story written from Scranton, Pa., and dated June 25: Forced by a refusal of a majority of employees to accept a 24 per cent reduction in wages, the greatest single unit in outdoor show business, the Ringling Bros., and Barnum & Bailey Combined Circus, closed its 1938 season here today. Objectors to the slash in salaries were, in nearly all instances, either performers or working men, and members of the A.F. of L. affiliates accepted the cut in wages with the hope that the show might continue a season that has been marked by business claimed to be decidedly under that of last year. With suspended performances since Wednesday evening, June 22, members of the Federation of Actors repeatedly refused to accept the show's reduction offer, even though the management stated definitely that it was already a case of lowering expenses or sending the show back to winter quarters in Sarasota, Fla.

Executives of the show and union, headed by President John Ringling North and Executive Secretary Ralph Whitehead, respectively, conferred at length during the four day strike in an effort to arrive at a solution to a problem that was threatening to throw 1,500 people out of approximately four month's work. Negotiations were unsuccessful, both parties refusing to compromise or accept the other's terms.

The circus is preparing to move out of Scranton shortly, with Sarasota its destination. Workingmen have agreed to load the show and see it safely "put away" in its Florida home. A written agreement substantiates promises by management and union to cooperate in

**This Kelty photo shows the full lot in Scranton, Pa. The crowd in lower left corner is looking at the photographer's plane that crashed. Pfening collection.**

getting the show out of Scranton as quickly as possible.

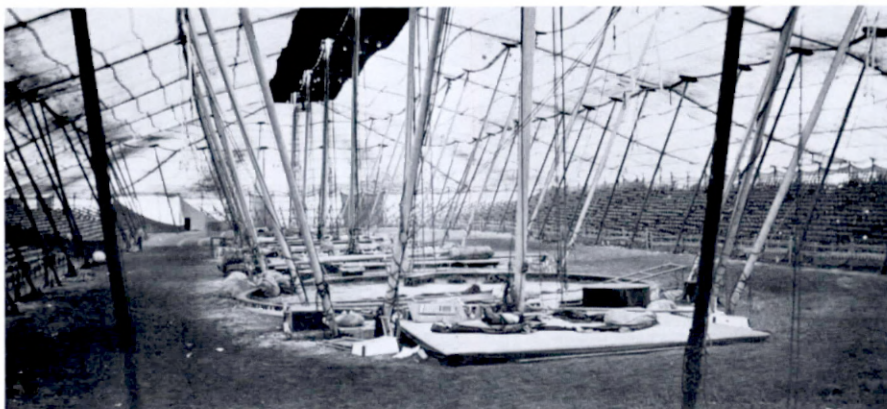
Terming it "one of the most tragic things in circus history," staff men, veteran performers and white-collar employees, plus many workers of experience in lower brackets, openly mourned the state of affairs. Many of these troupers stuck until the last to the ancient circus tradition that "the show must go on" and eagerly accepted the reduction in wages. As late as Sunday afternoon a small group of performers had refused to give up hope and were circulating a petition of loyalty to the employers. Within a few hours the petition, written and distributed by Art Concello, of the flying act by that name, had 250 names signed to it. Authorities said that, although no official vote had been taken, members of the advance crews, ticket sellers, press agents and wagon employees had informed the management that they were willing to agree to North's terms. Those employees are members of either the billposters' union or the Theatrical Managers, Agents and Treasurers, American Federation of Labor affiliates. Most top-flight performers also refused to attend AFA meetings or take part in the three day strike. As it became known that the show was actually "calling it quits" and that a few days of employment remained, many working men that had refused the cut began wondering and mumbling whether they had done the smart thing. Several attempts were made by small groups to arouse fellow working men to action that might result in reconsideration of a wage reduction in order that the show might continue. Little hope was held by officials, however, for resumption of negotiations with the union officials.

At the request of a group of working men Mrs. Charles Ringling, widow of one of the founders of the show and a director of the present corporation, appeared before an assembly in the big

top Saturday afternoon and pleaded with the workers to think long and hard before putting the "Greatest Show on Earth" off the road. Mrs. Ringling, who has trouped with the show for many years, received a tremendous ovation, but no definite action resulted. At the conclusion of arrangements Saturday night for departure of the train from Scranton, Ralph Whitehead made a final plea to the management to "avoid this horrible thing" and asked if something could not be worked out at the last moment to save the show from closing. North replied that the circus no longer held itself responsible for employment of the 1,500 workers and that it rested entirely with the union. Whitehead referred to the circus plan to return to Sarasota as a "squeeze-out play," but North retorted that it was the union that had tried a "squeeze-out" but that the circus had called its bluff.

Explaining that poor business and increased operating expenses had caused the show to lose money since it started its one-day-stand tour, North insisted that in order that the show keep moving it would be necessary for all employees to take the slash in wages. He offered to show the financial statements to the union to prove that business conditions were as stated. Whitehead refused to scan the records, claiming that they didn't mean a thing unless audited by a certified public accountant. Whitehead suggested that the show operate at the original contract rate until or when records indicated the corporation required reduced operating expenses, books to be audited by a certified public accountant appointed by the AFA. North refused the offer, stating again that an immediate cut was imperative. Several compromise settlements were suggested but in each instance both parties refused to waver from their contentions.

Thursday afternoon 96 performers assembled of their own accord and voted 83 to 13 to take the salary cut, and a committee consisting of Capt. John Tiebor, Art Concello and Frank Buck presented the results to Whitehead. The union official refused to recognize



The totally empty big top of the Ringling-Barnum Circus in Scranton, Pa. June 24, 1938. Bob Good photo.

the meeting or vote, stating that it was illegal. The following day another meeting of performers was called by the union in Adlin Hall and after several hours of discussion about 250 performers almost unanimously voted against taking the cut. Before the vote was cast, which was by acclamation, O. C. Skelton, local representative of the Teamsters and Truck Drivers' Union; Frank E. Walsh, American Federation of Labor organizer and Whitehead spoke at length on general trade-union practice and procedure. Circus officials and numerous performers and working men, repeatedly urged that all votes be taken by secret ballot, claiming that voters should have the right of private casting on a decision so vital to their future. But all votes were by acclamation.

When it became apparent that the only solution to the controversy would be to send the show back to winter quarters, union and circus officials gathered their legal counsel and arranged an agreement to safely see the show out of town. Agreements, signed at 9:25 Saturday night, provided for the circus to pay all union members full wages to date at the rate designated in the original contract entered into May 31, 1937, but not covering the period of strike except for the skeleton crew that worked during that time.

Union agreed to have its members load the circus and transport it to Sarasota, and the circus agreed to pay expenses incurred by the union during the strike. North paid Whitehead \$1,783.33 to cover expenditures for food to strikers; traveling expenses of Whitehead; expenses of Herbert Thatcher, attorney for the union and cost of rental of union meeting places. North also paid the city of Scranton \$1,315 for expenses incurred by the city during the labor trouble.

Following signing of the agreement and payment of monies, Whitehead served North summonses on two lawsuits based on breach of contract. One is a suit in equity, the other a suit in assumpsit and involving about \$100,000. Base of suits claim that the circus broke its original contract of last year

when it effected a wage reduction from June 19 to 22 when the employees walked out. Other suit is to collect damages for performers who had signed season contracts with the show.

Besides North, the circus was represented in the negotiations by William P. Dunn, Jr., Manufacturers Trust Co., New York, secretary-treasurer of the show; Leonard C. Bisco, New York attorney for the Manufacturers Trust Co.; Walter L. Hill Sr., Scranton attorney, Henry Ringling North, Mrs. Charles Ringling and Robert Ringling, director of the corporation.

The AFA was represented by Whitehead; Herbert Thatcher, Washington, D.C. attorney; John W. Murphy, Scranton attorney, Guy Magley and Dan Hurley, AFA organizers.

Strikers slept in regular quarters on the circus trains throughout the strike and were fed at the show's expense.

Circus officials spent Sunday preparing details for return to Sarasota, cancelling contracts and making arrangements for disposal of equipment, baggage stock, etc. Roland Butler, director of advertising and publicity, got in touch with the billing car crews. Contacting press agent Jerome T. Harriman, who is in Montreal, and story man, Gardner Wilson, in New Haven. Frank Braden made Scranton and Butler arrived Saturday from Albany, where the show was scheduled to play today.

North explained Sunday that the future of the show is uncertain other than it would definitely return to Sarasota. He would not comment on reports that the show might resume later in the season. He stated that the corporation is not in financial difficulties.

News item in the Scranton paper of June 27: The Ringling-Barnum Circus is still in town today, departure for Sarasota winter quarters having been postponed by rainy weather and the union's last minute demand that all

employees be paid in full before the show leaves town. With banks closed until 9 o'clock this morning, cash necessary for payment of salaries for last four days of season and usual "holdback" was not available over the weekend. Show is expected to be loaded today, however, employees paid and the long trek southward begun late tonight or Tuesday morning.

Another item appearing in the paper on the same date: Many performers and nearly all department heads, agents, clerical help and staff men have been strong in their denouncement of the American Federation of Actors and Ralph Whitehead in particular, maintaining that the union official had taken from them their livelihood and the show they loved by unfairly influencing the "irresponsible and erratic" element of the personnel. One prominent performer stated today that "it is impossible to have a fair vote under the Whitehead system."

A strong labor town for years, the Scranton public and the daily press leaned toward the strikers when the walkout began. As conferences between circus and union officials progressed and union mass meetings were held there was a definite "about-face" in press attitude, and several townspeople openly disagreed with the union official's manner of handling the striking employees.

A complete run-down on the story of the strike was given in the June 25 issue of the Scranton paper as follows: On Wednesday evening the American Federation of Actors closed the Ringling-Barnum Circus here by strike when members voted against putting on a show or moving until the dispute over a 25 per cent cut proposed by John Ringling North had been settled.

Decision to strike came after a meeting of performers and workers following the matinee. Meeting, presided over by Ralph Whitehead, executive secretary of the AFA, started at 5:30 and continued until 8:30, when the vote for the walk-out was taken.

Unanimous consent of performers and but a lone dissent among the workers was the answer to the question by Whitehead when he asked them if they wanted to drop on the night show.

Whitehead told the unionists "if North is not a fool, and I don't think he is, he'll come over here." Circus union leaders, as well as local Central Labor Union leaders, tried several times to have North address the assemblage, but instead he retired to a hotel with his colleagues to prepare a statement.

North's statement, issued the following morning, called for workers to be on the job at 1 P.M. Thursday. He reaffirmed statements that if the 25 per cent cut was not accepted the tents

would fold and return to quarters at Sarasota, Fla.

About 4,000 persons were in the big top awaiting the evening show when the strike was called. Hundreds of disgruntled customers rushed the box office Wednesday night and Thursday morning in an endeavor to have their money refunded. Many who had no passouts for general admission tickets (85 cents) were unruly, but no trouble resulted.

At 11:30 p.m. definite announcement that no peace had been reached and that the show would not move to Wilkesbarre, Pa. was made to the workers, who waited in the ball park. They were told to get some sleep and report Thursday morning at 9 for breakfast.

Twenty horse-top men volunteered to put up the horse tent. They and the animal keepers were the only workers on the lot. A radio was installed for the Louis-Schmeling fight while union leaders tried to have a showdown with North.

One hour before the meeting was held an announcement was posted backstage that the advertising agents had accepted the 25 per cent cut and the union billposters had requested their president, Leo Abernathy, to ratify the cut.

At the meeting Whitehead asked the union members not to lose their heads, that they remain orderly. Ruthlessly he scored the press, which he accused of selling out to circus owners and stool pigeons.

Whitehead said the reports that the show was losing money were untrue, that big houses had been played to. He said the circus owners were trying to wreck the union, but that the strength of the AFA could not be weakened as much as the prestige of the "Greatest Show On Earth" if it failed to play all the towns booked; declaring the show would be wrecked if it went back to quarters. He said the best circus weather was ahead and the route should be played.

He added Cole Bros. Circus had been offered a plan whereby workers would take an \$8 cut provided the reduction was paid back when and if business improved.

Whitehead assured unionists that recourse to law would be made and wages held in violation of contract would be collected. He said also that compensation claims would be taken care of. When announcement of the overnight stay was made, workers were told that one of their injured members had been taken to a hospital for treatment and that he and all strikers would be taken care of by the union.

A vote of thanks to police and local newspapers was made. He lauded the local press, saying it was very fair and unlike New York brother scribes. He then informed the workers that anyone

paid off short would have the shortage collected, when some men informed him they had been paid short. "I'm sick and tired of standing back quibbling for peace. Now we'll take it to the National Labor Relations Board," he said angrily.

A vote was then taken as to whether any were willing to take the cut. Both workers and performers voted "nay" unanimously. Previously he had asked whether it was true that they had accepted the cut. Wild cheering from workmen resulted when the performers said they had not.

He then said there was no question that the labor contract had been violated and they were justified in refusing to play the evening show. A vote was taken whether or not they should play the evening performance, resulting in but one dissent, from a teamster. Twice previously circus labor leaders had sent for North to "hear his side of the story." After the walkout, vote local union leaders joined the AFA leaders in an attempt to have North speak, but North refused, saying it was a meeting for union members only. Although 130 police officers and 21 State troopers were present, equipped for and expecting trouble, none resulted.

An item from a New York paper dated June 25 read: Ringling-Barnum No. 2 advertising car crew has been paid off in Albany as of today. It has not been working the past three days. No. 1 car is standing by in Burlington, Vt.

It is understood that the agreement with the Big Show on use of Barnum & Bailey title provides that the title revert to the heirs of Barnum if the show does not operate for 20 weeks in a season. H. Barnum Seeley, of Bridgeport, Conn., is the principal heir who would recover Barnum & Bailey part of the title if the agreement is not fulfilled, it is said.

The July 9th issue of the *Billboard* carried the headline: R-B SHOW BACK IN QUARTERS. Story followed dated

**The deserted midway and side show bannerline in Scranton. Only a security guard is present. Bob Good photo.**



July 2: Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, its 1938 season shattered by labor trouble, crept back into quarters at dawn yesterday, just three months after its triumphal departure for Madison Square Garden, New York. John Ringling North, President, did not return with the show, having left in Washington for New York. Unloading operations, launched immediately upon arrival, were directed by George W. Smith, general manager. Two hundred and ten workmen came into quarters aboard the train, but Smith said all save the quarters crew would be discharged immediately after unloading. Quarters crew is about fifty men. Sarasota, foreseeing a dangerous unemployment situation, asked State officials to double the WPA quota of 120 men.

While all rumors of reorganization for the current year appeared groundless, evidence of an effort to build a strike-proof structure for next year was seen in the announcement that the Big One would be an "open-shop" show from now on.

McCormack Steele, ex-New York State labor department official and former Yale classmate of North, has been retained as personnel manager. Steele said that show labor from now on would be strictly non-union.

Workmen will be fingerprinted and classified before the show takes any of them on, Steele further said, and the "lawless" element will be entirely eliminated.

No union representatives were in evidence as the show came into quarters. The men appeared in good humor and performed their tasks with customary circus precision, although there was no indication of any hope of settlement on either side. The big top, still soaked from Pennsylvania rains and mud, was unloaded first and spread beneath a blazing Florida sun to dry. The quarters appeared in good shape, although recent rains all but flooded the place.

Show officials said that there were no developments in immediate sight, and that the intention of the management was to keep the show in quarters

and spend as little as possible until next Spring.

Sources close to North said there was nothing to the alleged agreement whereby the show would lose the Barnum & Bailey title if it failed to play for 20 weeks out of a season. They said the Barnum & Bailey name was the absolute property of the Ringlings and that the Big One would still be Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey when it rolls northward in the Spring of 1939.

A story in the Washington paper dated July 2 read as follows: A midnight conference aboard the Ringling-Barnum train in Potomac railroad yards here finally determined whether the show would try to outwit labor troubles and bad business prospects or go back to Sarasota.

When the four sections rolled in Tuesday night they were met by Melvin D. Hildreth, who that day had protested the closing of the circus to William Green, of the AFL, along with a score of reporters and news photographers. Neither John nor Henry North was on the train, and it was explained that they were to motor down to meet the train.

While waiting for the arrival of the Norths, staff men displayed sections of air-brake connections which had been slashed by vandals at Erie. "We're asking for a federal investigation of this," general manager George Smith told newsmen. A check at the FBI indicated no record of a request for the investigation.

Comment among performers was that Ralph Whitehead, executive secretary of the AFA, was almost entirely responsible for the shutdown.

While waiting for the Norths it was found that no orders had been given or no arrangements had been made to move the train any further south. Stock men tending the animals were steadfast in their belief that the show would reorganize in Washington. "Why are the horses here instead of being shipped to Peru?" they asked.

Sometime after 11 o'clock that night the two North brothers arrived, going into immediate conference with their staff. The trainmaster was consulted and at that time it was decided to go over the canvas, which had been wet when loaded at Scranton. The next day it was decided to get under way by noontime, leaving the canvas as is, wetting it enroute by hose until it could be dried at Sarasota.

Presumably answering Hildreth, Ralph Whitehead issued a statement Wednesday from the office of William Green, disclaiming responsibility for the closing of the show. Said he: "Mr. North and the circus management felt they had already licked the cream of the business in the big cities and were unwilling to take the usual business risk of continuing their scheduled tour of the smaller cities, even though they are forcing the 1,600 circus employees

out of their jobs." Hildreth immediately denied that the circus management was eager to quit.

Reaction of the press to the closing of the circus was very unfavorable, and in Washington it was believed that the obstinate course taken by Whitehead will react upon union labor in general.

The *Billboard* of July 16 carried the headline: BARNES SELLS-FLOTO TITLE CHANGED. The story that followed this headline and dated New York, July 9 went on to read: Roland Butler, who was general press representative of the Ringling-Barnum show, told a representative of the *Billboard* here yesterday that the billing of the Barnes show for the remainder of this season is to be "Al G. Barnes and Sells-Floto Combined Shows Present Stupendous Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Features." The regular titles will be used by the two organizations next year, he said.

Right underneath this item in the same issue was another story from Sarasota dated July 9 as follows: Feature acts and attractions and equipment of the Ringling-Barnum circus left here on a 21 car train on Monday, bound for Redfield, S.D., and the Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto Circus.

General Manager George W. Smith of R-B, leaving with the train, said that the Ringling owned Barnes show has "leased" the Big Show features included and would introduce them as "presented thru arrangement with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey."

On the train, which pulled out of winter quarters just three days after the show's arrival, were Gargantua, widely publicized Ringling gorilla, in his air conditioned cage; the Walkmirs; the Grotofents; the Naittos; the Cristianis; William and Tamara Heyer and their trained horses; Terrell and Dolly Jacobs and their lion act; four elephants, two giraffes, the big top and menagerie tent and 4,500 seats.

Smith said that Frank Buck would also join the Barnes show, probably in Chicago, as would Roland Butler and Frank Braden, of the Ringling press

**The returned circus train is unloaded in the winter' quarters in Sarasota, Fla., following the closing of the show in Scranton. Eddie Jackson photo.**



department. Other Ringling men who left here to join Barnes included Treasurer Fred De Wolf, Bandmaster Merle Evans and Pat Valdo, personnel director.

Smith, who plans to return to quarters after delivering the big show attractions, also said that the Barnes show would probably be rerouted to catch the principal cities on the abandoned Ringling route.

Smith further said that Barnes would be quartered at Sarasota next winter instead of in Baldwin Park, Calif., and that it might even close its season here. Quarters were left in charge of Ed Kelly, pending Smith's return. Personnel manager McCormick Steele also remains, as do Menagerie Superintendent Franz Woska and Elephant Boss Larry Davis. John Ringling North, who did not make the trip to Sarasota, is slated to join the Barnes show in Chicago.

Now that we have some of the Ringling features and equipment on their way to join the Barnes show, I would like to return with you in this story to that unforgettable night the Big Show closed in Scranton, Pa. As a young one around carnivals, I had seen fires, riots, been in floods and witnessed attachments of show property, but what I saw the night that the evening performance of the Ringling-Barnum circus was cancelled was a magnitude to behold. The unruly portion of the circus attendance came out of the big top clamoring for refunds on their tickets. The only wagon opened for this purpose was the yellow wagon. Joe Boyton did a tremendous job under the circumstances. Customers with calmer attitudes returned the next day and received their refunds in a leisurely manner. As it was learned later on, Boyton refunded more money than was necessary. This happened when those who got in the circus by just paying tax on "longs" that were given to them, returned with their seat stubs and received the full price of a reserved seat. With the situation as it was, Boyton had no time to separate one from the other.

The one person that missed all the excitement that evening of the 22nd of June was my side show boss, Clyde Ingalls. He had left that morning for



Pat Valdo passes out the final pay envelopes in Scranton. The man with hat and cigar is clown Felix Adler. Bob Hasson collection.



The author Bob Hasson is shown on the left with Terrell Jacobs, center, and Dr. Joseph H. Bergin on right. Photo taken on the Barnes show in 1938. Bob Hasson collection.

New York City to see the Louis-Schmeling fight and running the side show was the assistant manager, John "Doc" Oyler. Under normal conditions Oyler was a nervous individual and on this particular night he was a pitiful sight. The side show was still open and doing business when the mob came onto the midway from the big top. Oyler looked at me and shouted as to what I thought he should do. I shouted back to him to close the show which he did immediately to everyone's relief.

For the next three days the circus lot was a sad sight while talks between circus management and union heads went on. To make matters worse, a rain that turned into a fine drizzle settled in on the show and remained until the equipment was torn down and loaded. A real sad thing that happened during this period was the death of two local newspaper people, a reporter and photographer. They were in a small plane flying low over the circus grounds taking pictures when suddenly the plane nose dived to the ground not more than two hundreds yards behind the big top.

After all of us received our final pay, I caught a bus for Philadelphia and home. Two days later I went to Atlantic City thinking I might get something to do for the rest of the Summer season. I went and saw Sam Gumpertz, who was managing the Million Dollar Pier for George Hamid. Gumpertz was glad to see me and hired me on the spot to work and bally-hoo the pier attractions from the front on the boardwalk. During the next two days I found out that I wasn't the only refugee from the Ringling circus that was working on the pier. There was about thirty of us that Gumpertz had hired including Bob Reynolds who was in charge of the props and rigging for acts performing at the end of the pier. Joe Lynch was in charge of security, a job that was created by Gumpertz to give Lynch

and a large group something to do to earn money to live on. Hamid hit the roof when he came from his New York office on the weekend and saw so many people added to the already large payroll but Gumpertz held his ground and everyone kept his job.

On July 14 I received a telegram from Clyde Ingalls asking me to join him on the Barnes show. I showed the wire to Gumpertz and he assured me that he wouldn't be angry if I wanted to go. I was very grateful to Gumpertz for giving me a job when I needed it and he made me promise if anything should happen to make the change unpleasant, that I would return to the pier. I took a Greyhound Bus from Philadelphia to LaCrosse, Wisconsin and it was the first and last long bus ride I have ever taken. I arrived in LaCrosse on the 16th of July, the day before the Barnes show was due to play there. To my dismay, I arrived without my luggage, it getting misplaced in the changing of buses at Chicago but was assured it would arrive the next day, which it did.

The Barnes show was a small circus to me after being on the Ringlings show and the sleeping accommodations were such that most of the cars were mixed with personnel from different departments. For example, in car 42 where I had a middle bunk in a three high were clowns, ticket takers, musicians and side show acts. On the Ringling show all the side show personnel were quartered in the one sleeper. There were 104 people sleeping in car 42 and I thought I had everyone counted until a foot hit me on the head one morning protruding from a bunk over the wash stands in the center of the car. I also discovered a berth over the doors at each end of the car. I don't know who was on the front of the side show before I joined but the only one that remained after the two shows combined was Jimmy (Kid) Cotton, James (Candy) Shelton and I made up the front contingent. Shelton, who had charge of Eko and Iko the sheep headed men, came from Sarasota with Ingalls and a few other acts. The

manager of the Barnes' Side Show was Arthur Windecker, one of the finest men in the business. There were many good professional people on the Barnes show staff but eventually, if they didn't leave on their own they were relieved of their position.

Shelton told me that when the Ringling group arrived in Redfield, S.D. the situation was very tense. I readily saw this after I joined. There were two bosses in every department. The Barnes' bosses told their men not to listen to the Ringling bosses and the Ringling bosses told their men likewise. It wasn't too long before the Ringling department heads were in complete charge of the running of the show. Ingalls took charge of the Side Show as soon as he arrived on the scene and after a few weeks of drawing his salary and doing nothing but standing around, Windecker left. I was sorry to see him go.

Some of the old timers on the show told me the conditions were more bitter this time than when the Ringling and Barnum Shows combined. That time it happened when the shows were not in operation.

In the July 23 issue of the *Billboard* the bold type read across the circus page, BARNES-S-F REORGANIZED and a story written from Chicago dated July 16 read as follows: That there are still hundreds of performers and working men who are loyal to the circus and its traditions is being strikingly demonstrated in the new set-up on the Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto Circus. Despite threats, rumors and a shortage of help, the show, augmented with many of the feature attractions of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, is moving along with a minimum of difficulties and showing regularly.

Redfield, S.D., was the first stand of the augmented show and there was,



naturally, some difficulty in getting the new order started. By the time the show reached Huron, S.D., it rapidly took shape. A representative of the *Billboard* visited the show in Huron. Show arrived late and the matinee was started at 4 o'clock. House was very light as hundreds who had been on the lot earlier left when it was apparent the show would be at least two hours late. Show was presented in full, with exception of a few minor cuts. Evening show got under way on time, with about 4,000 in attendance. Performance, in charge of Pat Valdo, ran with remarkable smoothness and was enthusiastically received.

Although there had been rumors that the American Federation of Actors would picket and otherwise harass the show, there was no trouble at Huron. No representatives of the union were in evidence, and it was the general opinion that none would be encountered before the show reached La Crosse, Wis.

Because of the acute shortage of help, it was necessary for everyone on the show to pitch in and assist in putting it up and taking it down. Performers and working men alike lent the fullest cooperation and it was heartening to see the manner in which they worked. From highest to lowest, they worked to get the show going. John Ringling North, Henry (Buddy) North, George W. Smith and Pat Valdo and other executives worked side by side with the working men. Star performers were busy getting the tops up, carrying stringers, seats, etc., and in the cookhouse bally girls peeled potatoes and other performers washed dishes and performed other menial tasks. After the night show everyone assisted in tearing down and loading. Marshall, Minn., gave the show a very fair day—a good matinee and about a two-thirds house at night. Little delay in making the 160 mile jump from Huron and matinee was less than half an hour late. Show got away in good time for the short run to New Ulm.

Marshall was the first town on the newly laid out route and business was better than anticipated because of the necessarily short billing. No paper advertising Ringling features used up to Marshall. Nor was there any mention of the Ringling show or acts in the big show announcements. However,

**The Al G. Barnes and Sells-Floto Combined Circus Presenting Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Stupendous New Features added the famous John Robinson title to a number of its bill stands after the combining of the shows in 1938. The show played Portage, Wis. on July 18 and returned to the area on August 2 for a Madison, Wis. stand. Both dates were billed in Baraboo where this photo was taken by Bill Kasiska.**

announcements of additional Ringling acts were made in the newspapers and on the radio. Frank Braden and Gardner Wilson were ahead at Huron. Sam Stratton, back with the show at Huron and Marshall, expected to leave for the East Sunday.

Switching of the Barnes route put the show in the midst of the wheat harvest this week. As a result many working men left for the harvest fields, as they always do in such circumstances. In spite of these defections the show has managed to move with a minimum of delay. Replacements are rapidly being made and with the show out of the harvest country in a few days it is expected conditions will rapidly improve.

George W. Smith, Ringling show manager and now pilot of the Al G. Barnes Sells-Floto show, when asked for a list of the new personnel of the show told a representative of the *Billboard* that no roster could be given out at this time, as staff is in process of change. Smith will continue to manage the show. Both John and Henry North are traveling with it. Clyde Ingalls has taken over management of the side show and will bring on a number of Ringling show features.

George Tipton and his cookhouse crew have left. So also have Ike Robinson and Paul Eagles and the entire advance crew. Theo Forstall remains and is working in the red wagon. Fred DeWolf has come over from the Ringling show. Blackie Williamson continues as boss property man; John Hanley is trainmaster and Mike Tschudy, boss hostler.

Pat Valdo has charge of the entire show performance and is rapidly whipping the new line-up into first-class shape. Herb Duval is on the job as legal adjuster. Merle Evans is leading the band for the big show performance, while Eddie Woekener leads in

preliminary concerts and the aftershow. Considerable equipment, including caterpillar tractors, etc., has been brought over from the Ringling show. More probably will be added. At Huron and Marshall the menagerie top was not used.

The program, with the addition of many Ringling attractions, as now presented is an exceptionally strong one. First night it ran over three hours, but it is rapidly being trimmed to a reasonable length. Ringling big top is being used but two middle pieces have been eliminated, necessitating omission of the two stages and leaving a three ring show.

The show when caught at Huron, S. D., had not yet settled into a set routine, changes being made as required. They are still being made in order to give a better balanced show and cut running time, but the following brief outline gives substantially the routine that is being followed. The animal act of Dolly Jacobs is not working, due to length of program.

Display 1.—Tournament, given added color by the addition of Ringling wardrobe and making a great flash.

No. 2—Mabel Stark's group of tigers and lions. Mabel, veteran of countless battles in the arena, is still queen of the jungles and handles her cats with skill and showmanship.

No. 3—In Rings 1 and 3, ponies worked by Betty Miller and Ova Thornton. Center ring, tiger riding elephant, by Bertha Matlock.

No. 4—Clowns on track.

No. 5—Ring 1, dogs; Ring 3, seals, in pleasing routines.

No. 6—Capt. Terrell M. Jacobs and lions. A fast moving act, superbly handled by Jacobs, whose work is better than ever before. Features roll-over lion and tight-rope-walking lion.

No. 7—On track, two elephants carrying ponies. Also parade of hippo; Bobby, hind-leg dog, circling track and man carried by head in elephant's mouth.

No. 8—Ladder girls—some twenty-over track and rings, and over center ring a single trapeze act and Anna Merkel in ceiling walk.

No. 9—Gaited horses—magnificent animals put through their paces by skilled and graceful riders.

No. 10—Liberty horses in Rings 1 and 3, worked by Jack Joyce and John

White; center, zebras, by Robert Thornton, concluding with free-running horses, zebras and camels circling an elephant in center ring, in a pleasing tableau.

No. 11—Janet May presenting her spectacular one-arm swings.

No. 12—Clowns on track.

No. 13—The Naitto Troupe of Chinese wire walkers, head and hand balancers.

No. 14—Perch acts, Roman rings, trapeze, etc. Included the Walknirs, the Oliveras, the Cristianis, the Moratos and a couple of other acts from the Ringling show.

No. 15—Gargantua the Great, presented by Frank Buck. An impressive sight.

No. 16—Riding acts. In Ring 1, the Cristianis; Ring 3, the Reiffenachs. Superb riding and entertainment.

No. 17—Elephants in all rings, under direction of Walter McLain and worked by Siva Phillips, Irene Servis and Olivia Desmond. Concluding with long mount on track, and Modoc, dancing elephant.

No. 18—Flying acts. The Concellos, three people, and the Flying Lorings, five people.

No. 19—Ring 1, unsupported ladders; center ring, the Yom Kam Troupe; Ring 3, the Cristianis, teeterboard.

No. 20—High-school horses. Beautiful stock, expertly ridden by attractive girls. Clever specialties by Jack Joyce and William Heyer.

No. 21—Races conclude the show.

Also in the July 23 issue of the *Billboard* was a half page ad announcing the Bankruptcy Sale of Tim McCoy Wild West Circus Equipment by Public Auction commencing Monday, August 1, 1938 at Baltimore and Ohio Freight Depot, Florida Ave. &

**The big show band rode baggage wagon No. 142 in a special Labor Day parade in Wichita, Kan. in 1938. A banner mentions AFL American Federation of Musicians. Pfening collection.**

Eckington Place, Washington, D.C. at 10 O'Clock A.M.

A short item in the July 30 issue of the *Billboard* mentioned the first picketing of the Barnes show and read as follows: Janesville, Wis. July 20. - Business for the Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto circus here on Tuesday was light. Show left Portage very late and matinee here was delayed, resulting in about a one-third house. Some 15 or 20 pickets had assembled at the lot, carrying banners reading, "This show is unfair to union labor." An attempt was made to disperse the pickets and later in the day several hundred local men, most of them said to have been members of the CIO, joined the pickets.

In an attempt to make its position clear the show ran an ad in the local papers reading: "Attention! Members and friends of organized labor. Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto Circus, presenting Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey stupendous new features, is most friendly to organized labor and exclusively employs union musicians, billposters, treasurers, ticket sellers, agents and press representatives—all of whom are paid up members of the American Federation of Labor and in good standing. Spend your union dollars at home - Today at the big show."

Many of the so-called pickets were local high-school girls and boys to whom the whole affair was a lark.

From the *Billboard* issue of August 6, a story from Racine, Wis. dated July 30 read: Momentarily forgetting their differences, the AFL and the CIO combined forces here to combat the Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto Circus, which was to have played here Friday. Arrangements had been made for an extensive picket line and attempts were to have been made to prevent the delivery of food and other supplies to the circus grounds.

Having been apprised of this several days in advance, the show cancelled Racine at the last minute and jumped directly from South Bend, Ind., to

Milwaukee. No trouble was anticipated at Milwaukee, assurance having been given by local labor men that nothing would be done to embarrass the circus. Show plays Milwaukee July 29-31.

Headline on the circus page of the August 13 issue of the *Billboard* and the story that followed read: BIZ SLUMP HALTS COLE TOUR. Bloomington, Ill., Aug 6. - After battling the business slump almost continuously for 16 weeks, Cole Bros. Circus at the conclusion of the night performance here Wednesday drew in its belt and called it a season. The circustrains, traveling over the Nickle Plate Railroad, departed at 1 A.M. for winter quarters at Rochester, Ind. The paraphernalia, equipment and animals will be kept intact and plans will soon go forward for the 1939 season. The hearty loyalty and co-operation given the management by the employees of the show has probably never been equaled in the annals of the white tops. Joe Weber, president American Federation of Musicians.; Leo Abernathy, president International Alliance of Billposters and Billers and Ralph Whitehead, head of the American Federation of Actors, all three organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, co-operated with the management in every way possible to keep the show going.

As the amusement business is a luxury at best, the recession quickly caught the Cole show, as well as other circuses, early in its tentacles this season. Opening the middle of April at the Chicago Stadium, always a sure-fire in other seasons, business this spring shrank to less than one-half of the normal take.

On the road the Chicago business was but a criterion. Almost in every city business with the show was off

**Two Barnes baggage wagons and a Ringling wagon on a Ringling flat on the Barnes show in 1938. Pfening collection.**





This full lot view shows the Al G. Barnes Circus in Bartlesville, Okla., Sept. 7, 1938. Bob Hasson collection.

from a 1/3 to 50 per cent. As a rule the show experienced about two satisfactory days' business a week against four losing days. In the face of such obstacles the tour was continued after a consultation with the employees, who unanimously stated they were willing to string along and hope for a business pick-up.

"Never had to experience such continual bad business and weather during the 35 years I have been in the circus business," stated Zack Terrell, manager. "The only cheerful and heartening part of the season was the unselfish loyalty and help furnished by the employees to a man. When salaries fell behind there were no attachments; in fact, the employees acted as if they were all partners in the amusement institution they were seeking to carry on to success.

"For weeks the show battled days of rain of torrential proportions. Yet the show moved with marvelous precision and almost invariably opened on time. Thousands of loyal circus-goers greeted us daily, but their attendance with other thousands absent because of non-employment was the difference between a profit and a loss.

"Not in any way do I think the permanency of the circus is on the wane. The business grossed by two of the largest circuses on the road last season was greater than the combined gross of all the circuses of 30 years ago. Good times fill the red wagon with bounteous returns but likewise hard times are keenly felt."

There was a small ad in the September 10 issue of the *Billboard* announcing that there would be a Public Auction held on Monday, September 19, 10:30 A.M. at Sheboygan, Wisconsin to sell in lots and parcels all of the physical assets and Good Will of SEILS-STERLING CIRCUS.

An editorial appeared in the New York Times on August 6 with the title, "AN ENDANGERED TRADITION" the text of which follows: The circus industry has stuck in some mud holes this season out of which even the biggest elephants couldn't pull it. One show folded up after a strike, the merits of which were not determined by the NLRB but whose results were shocking to all who were once small boys. A Wild West outfit had to be sold at auction, gilt, horses, feathers and all. These things, as the Circus Fans of

America have just resolved, must not be. Their re-elected president, Melvin D. Hildreth, of Washington, declares that prompt action is essential if the "big top" is not to follow the route of the small town opera house, and a committee has been appointed to take the required action with the essential promptness.

A circus, of course, is subject to economic law. If the public will not pay for it, the outcome is bankruptcy. It cannot live on free passes—which, incidentally, the Circus Fans do not accept. It cannot live on sentiment. It must have bread and butter, ham and eggs, hay and oats. But it would be a sad day for the United States if economic law condemned this enchanting form of entertainment to extinction. One cannot suggest that the WPA take it over, for the circus is individualism in its most virulent form. Discipline and order it must have, with a ringmaster to crack the whip, but regimentation and standardization would kill it dead as a door-nail.

The circus, at its best, is a first-class example of the old American way of doing things—noisy, blaring, rich with color, rolling all history into a glorious hodgepodge, smelling of

prairie earth and New England barnyards, yet redolent of the perfumes of Araby. We didn't invent it, but it is steeped in our tradition. Streamlined or knobby, may it recover from its slump and once more come into its own—the delight of youth, the solace of old age. We need circuses as well as bread.

In closing, I want to say with pride that the Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto Combined Circus with stupendous attractions from the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show On Earth continued on its way through the 1938 season closing in its winter quarters home town of Sarasota, Florida on November 27.

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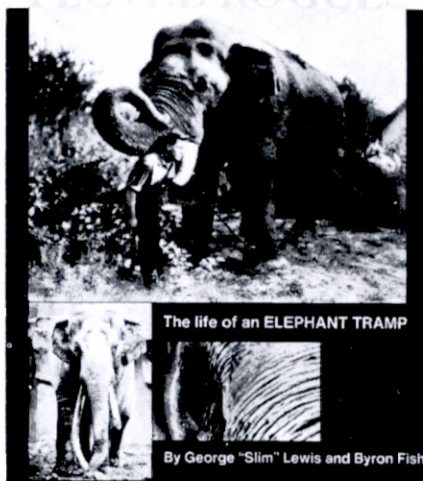
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# COLE BROS. QUARTERS, OJUS, FLA.

by Joseph T. Bradbury



Photo No. 1 - Sideshow panel wagons No. 60-61 were used to form the entrance gateway to Cole Bros. quarters, Ojus, Fla., winter of 1949-50. Various sizes and designs of billing paper which had been in use for many seasons were put on the panels to make an attractive bannerline for the public to view.

The Cole Bros. winterquarters were used only once, from mid October 1949 until mid April 1950. Consequently, photos taken at the site are quite scarce. We are fortunate here to have the set taken by Dyer M. Reynolds at Ojus during the winter of 1949-50. The negatives are currently owned by Al Conover and these prints are from the Pfening Collection.

As noted in the Cole Bros. 1949 Season article which was printed in the May-June 1980 *Bandwagon* the Ojus, Florida quarters were purchased by Jack Tavlin and his associates in the spring of 1949 and it was planned they would be the winter home for the show from then on.

The layout had formerly been used by the government for a World War II shipyard. The site consisted of 155 acres located a short distance east of U.S. 1 just north of

Photo No. 3 - Elephants and Mack truck outside the main building at Cole Bros. quarters, Ojus, Fla., winter of 1949-50.



It is with regret that we report the death of Dyer M. Reynolds on October 22, 1980, in Los Angeles, Calif. He had reached his 50th birthday on September 16th of this year. His remains were cremated and scattered at sea. Reynolds worked in the menagerie, electrical and concession departments of the Ringling-Barnum Circus from 1950 through 1956. The many photos he took of the equipment on that show are prized possessions of hundreds of model builders and historians. He was a talented artist, having done many circus scenes in sculpture, ceramics and oils. This photo spread of the Cole winter quarters is published at this time in his memory.

Miami. A rather narrow road led from the main highway into the area. On the land was one large building which was 420 ft. long x 60 ft. wide x 50 ft. tall. It had a concrete floor and was glassed on all sides. There was a railroad siding and a canal 90 ft. wide running 1,000 ft. into the grounds. Rear of

Photo No. 5 - Elephants inside the Cole Bros. main building at the Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50.

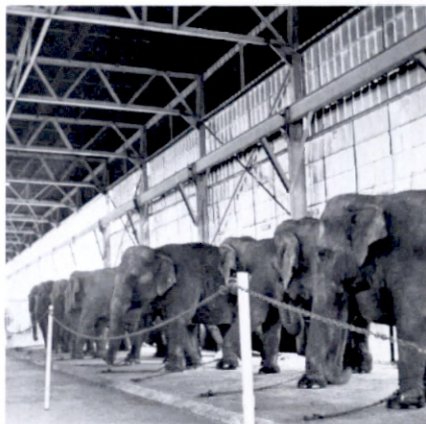


Photo No. 2 - Sideshow panel wagon used to form the entrance gateway to Cole Bros. quarters in Ojus, Fla.

the area was right on the Atlantic. The Tavlin group had grand plans to develop the site into a major tourist attraction. The show's 1949 printed program had an article about the new quarters and a huge two page drawing depicted a number of carnival type amusement rides, several additional smaller structures besides the main building, the erected big top, the show's train on the siding. The entire area was landscaped with palms and other native flora. The new Cole quarters would be fully geared to make a strong play for the Florida tourist dollars.

The high hopes for the Ojus quarters never materialized and that story will be told in the Cole Bros. 1950 season article to appear later in the *Bandwagon*.

During the single winter, 1949-50, the Cole show was in Ojus the large building was the center of most of the storage and other activities. It provided space for all of the canvas, seats, and other physical properties, the horses, lead stock, elephants, as well as the menagerie cages. It appears no permanent type cages were built so the

Photo No. 4 - Baggage wagon No. 82 at the Ojus quarters. In rear is portion of the main building.



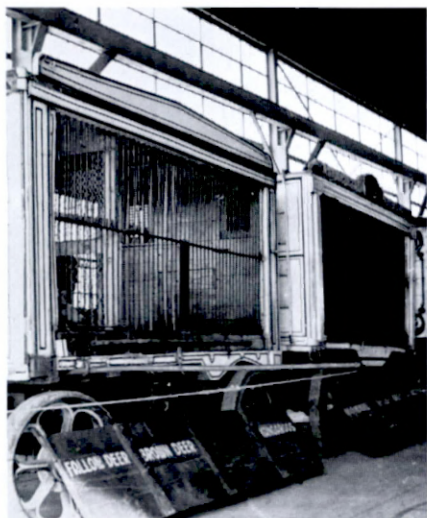


Photo No. 6 - Line of Cole Bros. cages parked inside the main building at the Ojus, Fla. quarters.

animals remained in their road dens during the winter. Also inside the building were parked the America steam calliope and ticket wagons. So large was the building area there was room for the carpenter and most of the repair shops. Photos indicate the blacksmith shop was located outside. Baggage wagons were stored in the open and the train was parked on the siding.

Sideshow wagons No. 60 and 61 were placed at the entrance to the quarters. The panels were unfolded and on them were posted examples of the show's billing paper which had been in use for a number of years. A most attractive circus effect was thus created.

Although some repair work on the equipment was accomplished during the winter of 1949-50 a minimum effort was expended. Photos of the baggage wagons in 1950 indicate that the rather drab appearance of the blue lettering on an orange background had been livened up during the winter by adding white shading. On several wagons additional advertising lettering was painted on the sides.



Photo No. 7 - Ring stock housed inside main building at the Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50.

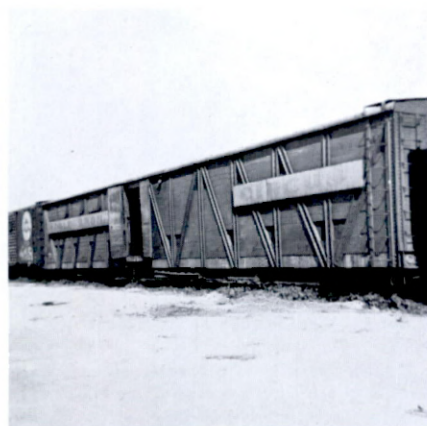


Photo No. 8 - Cole Bros. elephant car No. 34 on siding at Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50.



Photo No. 10 - Repair work in progress on Cole Bros. coaches at Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50.



Photo No. 11 - Cole Bros. gnu cage and baggage wagons parked at the Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50. The animal itself possibly was deceased at this time or housed in another cage.

Photo No. 14 - Columbia ticket wagon after a coat of primer paint is parked on the Ojus, Fla. winterquarters grounds. Note the canopy used to shield ticket purchasers from the weather.

Photo No. 12 - Cole Bros. caterpillar tractor and chair wagon, No. 85 or 86, parked on the sandy soil at the Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50.

Photo No. 13 - Cole Bros. hippo cage No. 14 and stringer wagon No. 102 parked at the Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50.





Photo No. 15 - Cole Bros. No. 88, big top canvas wagon, parked beside the main building at the Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50.



Photo No. 16 - Blacksmith shop set up on the Ojus, Fla. quarters grounds winter of 1949-50.

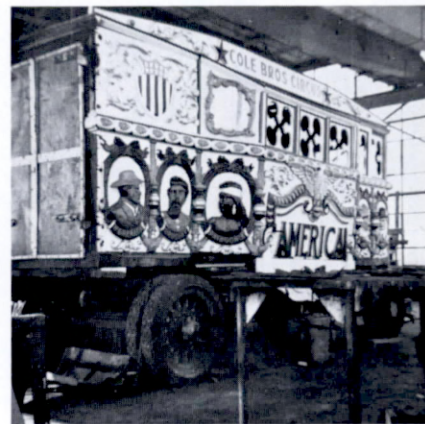


Photo No. 17 - America steam calliope inside the main building at the Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50.



Photo No. 18 - Cole Bros. general admission (red) ticket wagon inside the main building at Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50.



Photo No. 19 - Carpenter repair work in progress inside the Cole Bros. main quarters building, Ojus, Fla., winter of 1949-50.



Photo No. 21 - Cole Bros. private car, Saratoga Springs, on siding at Ojus, Fla. quarters, winter of 1949-50.

Photo No. 23 - Llamas and other lead stock are housed in pens at left while row of cages is at right. All menagerie animals and horses were housed inside the main building at the Cole Bros. quarters, Ojus, Fla., winter of 1949-50.



## CHRISTMAS WISHES TO ALL

To Cherished Old Friends  
To Treasured New Friends  
To Those Whose  
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May There Come To You  
At This Holiday Season  
Health, Happiness And Your  
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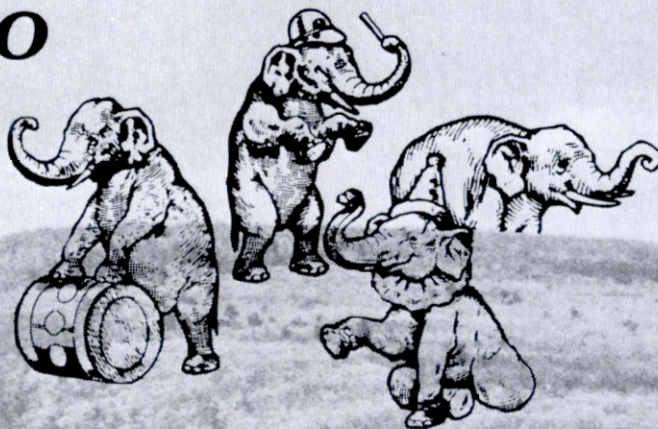
Betty & Earl Schmid

A special thanks to all for the gifts, cards, telephone calls, prayers and concern during my recent hospitalization. I have recovered from my accident except for a few scars from the fire.

I am sure the many good feelings brought on by your encouraging messages and the power of your many prayers reduced my suffering considerably and did much to speed my recovery. Thanks a million. May God Bless You and Keep You.

Betty Schmid

*from the  
bluffs of  
Baraboo*



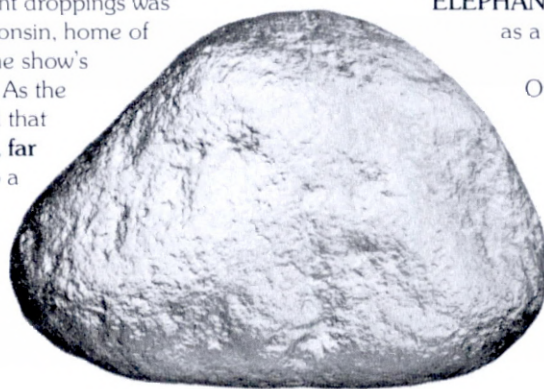
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# Rosa Rosaland

By John Daniel Draper

In order to better understand the skill and artistry of Rosa Rosaland (Rosalind) as a performer, it is well to compare and contrast her career with that of May Wirth.

These individuals were probably the only two women who ever regularly somersaulted from the back of one horse to that of a second horse running behind the first horse in tandem fashion in the sawdust ring. Neither of these women had ancestors who had pioneered in this particular feat nor did either have descendants to make it a tradition. They were both members of circus troupes that were headed by a mother or foster mother (in the case of May). The fathers of both were quite obscure. Also, both as children had extensive practice in acrobatics. Both families, Wirth and Kilian, were the nuclei of circuses with these respective family names, Wirth Bros. of Australia and the Rose Kilian Shows that operated in the southeastern part of the United States.

At this point the similarities end. The Wirth Family name as well as that of May Wirth was international in renown while the fame of the Kilian title was regional and Rosa Rosaland's name was most widely known in connection with Sells-Floto and Hagenbeck-Wallace in the late teen years. While May Wirth was featured on Barnum & Bailey, Ringling Bros., Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, Walter L. Main, etc. as a principal rider, she was also widely known as the mainstay, along with Phil Wirth, of the famous Wirth Family Riding Act. On the other hand, I have found no evidence that Rosa ever rode except in principal acts. Although May Wirth was younger than Rosa Rosaland by some four to six years, she performed the horse to horse somersault on Barnum & Bailey as early as 1912 while Rosa was not advertised as performing the similar feat on Sells-Floto until 1916. Also, May was active as a performer, not always with this most daring acrobatic act, as late as 1937 whereas Rosa had retired from the ring in the fall of 1919.

Rosena Kilian (Rosa Rosaland), the eldest of four children of Rosena Weber Kilian (1870-1936) and John Justis Kilian (1860-circa 1926) was born on April 18, 1890. Both of her sisters and her brother—Mabel, Ruth and Otto—were acrobats and aerialists. Her mother, one of a very few women circus owners and managers, operated the Rose Kilian Shows from 1907 until about 1929. This circus regularly toured in the smaller communities of Georgia, Florida, Alabama, North Carolina and South Carolina. The

father was nearly killed in a hay rube in Virginia and died later in an asylum in South Dakota as a result of the injury sustained in this circus fight. There seems to have been considerable mystery about Mr. Kilian. It appears that he was on the Show at times but for some reason he traveled under an assumed name.



Rosa Rosaland, one of only two lady somersault riders in circus history. Eddie Jackson collection.

The first reference to the performing career of Rosa Rosaland is in some unpublished notes of William L. Schultz, director of the Circus World Museum, concerning the professional career of his father, Billy Schultz. Just after the turn of the century, "Billy drifted over to the Kilian Family whom he taught acrobatics. In his spare moments he taught tricks to a small girl in the troupe. This girl later became one of the most famous bareback riders of all time—Rosa Rosaland."

In 1904 McDonald Bros.' New United

Rosa Rosaland appeared with the McDonald Bros. Shows in 1904. The steam calliope and bandwagon of the McDonald show in a parade around 1904. Pfening collection.



Shows signed the Kilian Family, then seven in number, for the big show and the concert.

A photo taken in 1905 shows the Kilian Sisters—Rosa, her mother and sisters as well as Otto, dressed as a family troupe in feminine blouses and skirts. In this same year the Kilian family was listed in the John Robinson's Circus program as acrobats and performers in a ring act and Rose Kilian participated in a double riding act.

The first reference to Rosa Rosaland as a principal rider is in 1910. By this time she had married the circus musician, Clinton V. Meyers, and was a performer on King & Tucker's Shows (E. H. Jones, mgr.). She was described as one of the most picturesque and sensational performers of her kind in America in all new acts including the execution of a complete somersault upon a barebacked horse.

By 1915 and 1916 Rosa had joined the Sells-Floto Circus and Buffalo Bill's Wild West, first as a somersault and bareback rider, and then in the second year as a featured horse to horse somersault and bareback rider. In 1915 Sells-Floto used two rings and a center stage. The program for that year described her act in ring number one as follows: "Maiden of Mystery, Rosa Rosaline, world's incomparable bareback equestrienne, in feats of daring and grace, doing one flip flop and jump-ups; only somersault lady rider positively turning somersault at every performance." In that same season her portrait and four photographic cuts of her somersault act appeared on the cover of one issue of *Billboard Magazine*.

At the Cincinnati stand of Sells-Floto in 1916 her act was described as probably the most daring on the program. "Her somersaults upon the back of one galloping horse and her somersault from the back of one running steed to the back of another are nothing short of marvelous and made the audience gasp." She thoroughly deserved the thunderous applause she received at the finish of her act. Riding in the center ring in 1916, flanked by the principal acts of Irene Montgomery and Stella Hobson, her performance was heralded in the official program as follows: "Rosa Rosaland, champion horse-to-horse somersault equestrienne of all the



world. From the back of one madly galloping steed she vaults through the air, turning completely over as she twists through the atmosphere, and alights on the back of the second horse. Queen of the sawdust ring is Rosa Rosaland, the only woman who ever has mastered the death daring feat here depicted. Watch her." Although this statement was not entirely correct by ignoring the fact that May Wirth had performed a similar act four years previously on Barnum & Bailey, it is interesting to note that in both 1915 and 1916 May was not in the United States, but in Australia with Wirth Bros. Circus.

Rosa Rosaland first joined Hagenbeck-Wallace in the 1917 season as a late addition in June after the Frank Miller Family Riding Act, with five beautiful horses, went over to Walter L. Main from Hagenbeck-Wallace. She performed the same daring somersaults as she had executed on Sells-Floto.

Rosa Rosaland was on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus again in 1918 and was initially reported as a fatal victim of the tragic train wreck at Ivanhoe, Indiana. These initial reports proved to be unfounded as she escaped serious injury in that catastrophe. In September of that year she did suffer considerable injury to her hands when she experienced a bad fall while performing in the ring. In 1918 she rode center ring, flanked by Miss Minnie Hodgini and Miss Elizabeth Rooney, and was simply described as "queen of all riders in a charming and graceful number". She executed all of her remarkable feats in bareback riding, culminating in the famous backward double somersault from one horse to another.

There is some question as to where she appeared in 1919. Although she was listed on a courier for Sells-Floto for 1919, her name did not appear in the Sells-Floto program for that year. In a *Billboard* article on March 8, 1919, it was stated that Rosa would be a featured equestrienne with

Rosa Rosaland's mother was Rose Kilian, one of only two lady circus owners. Rose Kilian is pictured just behind the marquee rope with the performers on her show around 1912. Pfening collection.

Hagenbeck-Wallace. However, she was not mentioned in the Hagenbeck-Wallace program for 1919. The fact remains that by the fall of that year she had retired with her husband, band leader Clinton V. Meyers, had purchased a home in Canton, Ohio and they were both taking things easy.

In February of 1922 an incident took place that demonstrated the high degree of skill that she possessed as an acrobat. The Nelson Family was booked for the Nazir Grotto Indoor Circus at Canton, Ohio. Two members of the family became ill with the mumps and had to be sent home. Rosa realized that their absence would be noticeable and might reduce the patronage of the show. She jumped into the act, with only a short time to rehearse, and helped to put it across. Other than to

This photo of Rosaland doing a somersault on horseback was taken in the Denver, Col., winter quarters of the Sells-Floto Circus in 1915. Eddie Jackson collection.



the sponsoring circus committee, the substitution was kept secret. Although out of the circus business for three years, she had done a remarkable job and was honored, later at a banquet, where she was presented with a wrist watch.

Rosa lived until Oct. 16, 1950 when she succumbed at the home of her sister, Mabel Wile, in Wooster, Ohio. She was also survived by her husband and her brother, Otto Kilian of Sylvia, Tenn. She was interred at Grand View Cemetery in Strasburg, Ohio.

Except for a few strokes of fate, the career of Rosa Rosaland would have been more famous than it was. Unfortunately, she lacked the youthful image of genius created for May Wirth by Ringling advertising and she passed from the circus arena after only a short time at the top of her fame. This analysis, however, is in no way intended to detract from the greatness of May Wirth and the style in which she presented her act.

Perhaps the moral is that in circus performances, the difference between just being good and demonstrating true excellence is not the difficulty or the uniqueness of what is being presented but the style in which the act is executed and the degree to which that style is publicized.

*Billboard* 3/19/1904, page 9  
*New York Clipper* 3/19/1904, page 86  
 John Robinson's Circus Program for 1905  
*Billboard* 3/19/1910, page 88  
*Billboard* 4/24/1915, page 58; 7/31/1915, page 58  
 Sells-Floto Circus Program for 1915  
*Billboard* 5/13/1916, pages 24, 49; 6/17/1916, page 62  
 Sells-Floto Circus Program for 1916  
*Billboard* 6/23/1917  
*Billboard* 5/4/1918, page 61; 7/6/1918,  
 Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus Program for 1918  
*Billboard* 3/8/1919, page 31; 11/22/1919, page 53  
*Billboard* 2/11/1922, page 66  
*Billboard* 2/28/1925, page 74 (1905 photo of Kilian Family)  
*White Tops*, June-July 1942, page 4 (1916 season)  
*Billboard* 11/4/1950, page 55  
*White Tops*, March-April 1979, pages 16-18 (Career of May Wirth)

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Fred D. Pfening, Jr.,  
 Editor & Publisher

## DAVID W. BLANCHFIELD

David W. "Deacon" Blanchfield died November 13, 1980 at the Veterans Home and Hospital, Rocky Hill, Conn. He was 91 years of age. He was the last surviving department boss of the Ringling-Barnum Circus during its final three decades under canvas.

Blanchfield learned the circus business as a baggage stock teamster, driving four and six horse teams. His first year on the Ringling-Barnum Circus is not known, however he was in the baggage stock department on that show in 1936-37-38. In 1939 he moved to the truck department. In 1942 he was named superintendent of that department and remained in that capacity through the final season under canvas in 1956.

In 1944 following the Hartford circus fire he and a number of other Ringling management people were convicted of criminal negligence. However his one year sentence was suspended.

"The Deacon" remained with the show while it played buildings and traveled by truck in 1957 and 1958. When the show went to rails in 1959 he was in the train department for a year or so.

After his retirement from the Ringling-Barnum he was brought to the Circus World Museum by Chappie Fox. It was during this



**The old pro, David "Deacon" Blanchfield, driving a former RBBB tractor pulling a former RBBB doniker wagon during the loading of the Circus World Museum train for Milwaukee in 1968. Albert Conover photo.**

period in Baraboo that the crusty old man warmed up to fans. He is well remembered

as driving a caterpillar tractor around the lot and on the train to the Milwaukee parade, always wearing a felt hat and with his tie turned to the back of his neck. He was often visited in Baraboo by his old pal Red Sonnenberg.

The death of David Blanchfield closes a chapter in the history of the American circus.

## BILL KASISKA'S CIRCUS LETTERHEADS



**This colorful letterhead was used by the Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West in 1899. The title and lettering are basically in different shades of blue. The two cuts are in sepla, the scroll work and shading are in gold. The original was written to the Strobbridge Lithograph Co., and is signed by G. W. Lillie "Pawnee Bill."**

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And Introducing  
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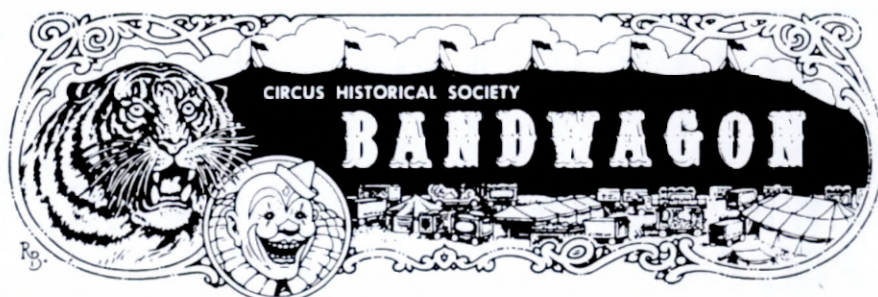
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Strobridge posters from the 1880's are less common than those of other periods. This unsigned lithograph is reproduced in its original colors as a Christmas gift from a friend of the CHS. It is from the Pfening collection.

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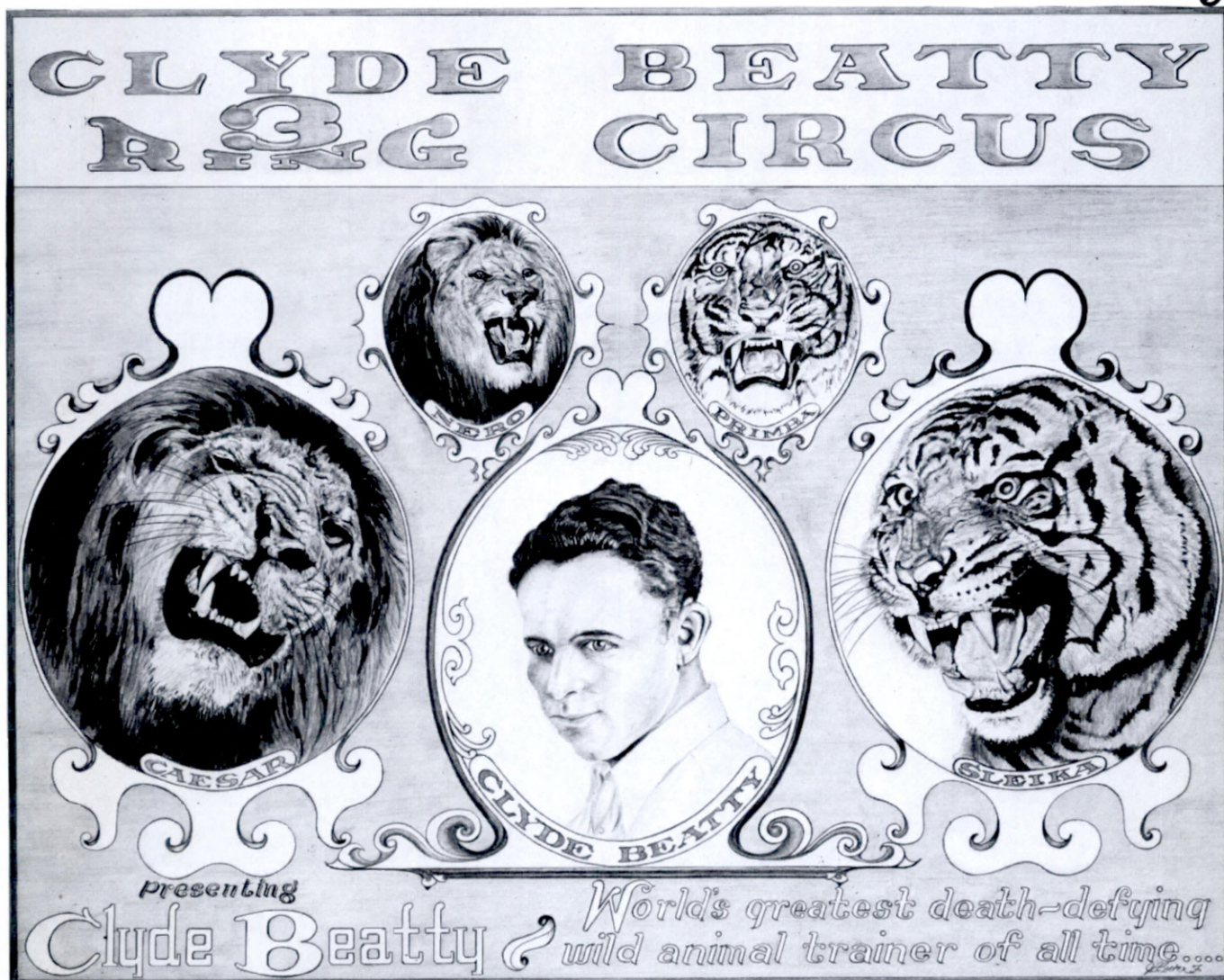
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